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THESIS

THE INFLUENCE ON SOME OF THE FOREMOST ENGLISH  
POETS WRITING FROM 1800 TO 1820 OF WORDSWORTH'S  
NATURE PHILOSOPHY AS EXPRESSED AND EXEMPLIFIED  
IN HIS "LYRICAL BALLADS"

BY

GERALD BECKLEY WOODRUFF  
(A.B., AMHERST, 1926)

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The Influence on Some of the Foremost English Poets  
 Writing from 1800 to 1820 of Wordsworth's Nature  
 Philosophy as Expressed and Exemplified in His  
 "Lyrical Ballads"

INTRODUCTION

As an apostle of nature Wordsworth stands foremost in the field of English poetry. Neither among his predecessors nor among his successors is there one to rival him in the profundity of his conception of the natural world. Although he is a master in describing external nature, it is in imbuing her with spirituality and in discerning the essential unity of all living things that he excels all others. Therein lies his especial glory, and therein evidence of the loftiness of his inspiration and the greatness of his creative imagination.

Although not fully appreciated by his early contemporaries, Wordsworth has been recognized by posterity as the high priest of nature, and his slender volume of poems containing the essence of his conceptions of nature, "Lyrical Ballads", has been acclaimed the high water mark in English nature poetry. That succeeding English poetry should be influenced by the emanations of such a power is inevitable. This influence is noticeable in the works of such poets as Emerson, Bryant, and Whittier; it pervades the work of our modern poets who write about nature. John Hall Wheelock, Conrad Aiken, Robert Frost, and William H. Davies are a few who have expressed ideas about nature which are almost identical with thoughts contained in "Lyrical Ballads".

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But in this paper I shall not try to point out Wordsworth's

influence on all succeeding English poetry; rather, I shall attempt to determine the influence of his nature philosophy on some of his contemporaries writing approximately between the years 1800 and 1820. These dates are selected in view of the following considerations: first, I wish to study a period, at least part of which is not subject to the influence of Byron, Shelley, and Keats; second, I wish to study Wordsworth's possible influence on the three Romantic poets just mentioned; and third, I wish to study the period immediately following the publication of "Lyrical Ballads".

In a study of this kind it is imperative that, before trying to determine the influence of Wordsworth's feeling for nature on his contemporaries, we understand clearly in what respects, if any, he differs from his predecessors. George Brandes has said of him, "His predecessors have, no doubt, smoothed the way for all that he had in common with them; but for what is peculiarly his own he is in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps".\* Once we know what is "peculiarly his own" we can proceed with the study of his effects of these distinctive characteristics on other poets.

As long as poetry is written nature will be a subject to be treated. From the beginning of English poetry to the present day we find evidence that sensitive souls of every age have recorded, to a greater or a less extent, their reactions to natural phenomena. Going back to the Middle Ages we find that Chaucer and his contemporaries, although not primarily interested in nature, devoted many passages to her. These were generally

\* Brandes, G.: "Main Currents in 19th Century Literature"-Vol. IV, p. 53.

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concerned with the broader, more general aspects of nature such as the succession of the seasons, day and night, the heavenly bodies, the movement of the ocean and the green grass of the fields. Usually the details were ignored. Poets of this period, as of our own, were moved to spontaneous expressions of joy by pleasing aspects of nature. Thus Chaucer voices his happiness at the approach of spring:

"Now welcom somer, with thy sunne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake!"\*

In the Elizabethan and Puritan Ages nature was treated more freely than ever before. Here we have large, vivid paintings of various natural scenes. Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights use these descriptions as background for human action. Generally Milton does the same, although in such poems as "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" nature is considered more for her own sake.

The "age of reason", represented by Dryden, Pope, and other Pseudo-classicists, supported an entirely different viewpoint on nature. In this age nature which was not man-made, or at least man-shaped, was considered vulgar and unrefined. Well-ordered gardens or carefully clipped hedges might be praised, but wild flowers growing in a field were beneath notice. Poets of this period who wrote about nature at all gave an artificial treatment of an artificially conceived subject. They derived little inspiration from wild nature.

The seventy-five years following the end of Pope's work

\*"The Parlement of Foules" - lines 690-692.

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The twenty-five years following the end of Pope's work

saw a reaction against this over-refined attitude. During these years poets, among whom were Thomson, Young, Collins, Gray, Crabbe, Burns, Blake, and Cowper, were again turning to wild nature as a source of material. This period, which is generally called the rise of naturalism, was characterized by an emotional enthusiasm for nature hitherto unknown in English poetry. It began with James Thomson and culminated with Wordsworth and the Romanticists.

As Stopford Brooke points out, Thomson, who was born in Roxburghshire and educated in Edinburgh, was undoubtedly influenced by the vigorous if unspiritual nature poetry of Scotland.\* His "Seasons" (1726) deals with nature in a realistic fashion. In these four poems Thomson records, in an affectionate manner, the daily life and work of the plowman, the shepherd, the farmer in his natural environment with its wild beauty. He shows in the poems a love of nature for its own sake, without reference to man. But in describing nature he endows it with absolutely no spiritual significance; rather, he describes externally the streams, woods, and hills as so many disconnected items. In this respect there is nothing of the later romantic spirit in his work.

Edward Young (1681-1765), writing somewhat later than Thomson, produced a sentimental, melancholy brand of nature poetry. In this respect he foreshadowed an unhealthy quality found in the works of some of the later Romanticists, among whose number Wordsworth is not to be found. Wordsworth's

\*"Naturalism in English Poetry"

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attitude toward nature is anything but melancholy; he reveals the joyous and optimistic aspects of a personality filled with love and good cheer.

William Collins (1721-1759), although retaining some of the artificial diction of Dryden and Pope, wrote some charming descriptions of nature which for their freshness and rapture are unequalled until Wordsworth. We notice in Collins' poems careful observation and, at times, subtle suggestiveness; his descriptions happily combine truth and idealism. Of his nature poems the "Ode to Simplicity" and "Ode to Evening" are the finest and most inspired, the latter being very near to the language and sentiment of Keats:

"O Nymph reserved, while now the bright-hair'd sun  
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,  
With brede ethereal wove,  
O'erhang his wavy bed."

The nature poetry of Thomas Gray (1716-1771) is much like that of his contemporaries. He, perhaps, approaches it in a more personal and sensitive way, but with him as with other poets of the time we fail to find those high spiritual and philosophic conceptions which elevate Wordsworth's poetry above that of his predecessors. Nature is still considered as a background or ornamentation for human action. For instance, in Gray's famous "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", we learn that it is late afternoon, the "glimmering landscape" is fading, the beetle is wheeling his "droning flight", the "moping owl" is complaining from "yonder ivy-mantled tower", the approaching night invests everything with a "holy calm". It is evident from

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these typical nature references that the subject of nature is not considered as being important in itself; it is merely incidental.

Two other important nature poets who immediately preceded Wordsworth are Crabbe and Burns. Crabbe (1754-1832) paints a harsh, stern nature; his scenes are low-lying, forbidding coasts, or barren countryside. He finds nature unfriendly. In "The Village" we see this as he describes the hostility of nature to man, a pitiful creature, living in squalor and filth. His nature descriptions are objective and realistic.

Robert Burns (1759-1796) saw nature in a different light. He felt that nature was fundamentally kind. But although he loved nature, he loved humanity more. Hence it is that in his poetry natural objects are made to harmonize with humanity and are introduced to throw light on his consideration of man. In plowing he crushes a daisy; he speaks as if he had crushed a child, and thus slips out of close intimacy with nature to his main interest, humanity. His sorrow at having disturbed a field mouse is short-lived as it gives rise to a philosophical consideration of man.

"The best laid plans of mice and men goon aft aglee." And so it is that although Burns treats nature sympathetically, he does not sound the depths of her spiritual possibilities.

Although William Blake (1757-1827) is generally remembered for his weird poems about the spiritual world, some of his best and less obscure poetry contains passages showing a joyful intimacy with nature and a thoughtful consideration for some of

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"The best laid plans of mice and men go for naught." And so it is that although Burns treats nature sympathetically, he does not sound the depths of her spiritual possibilities. Although William Blake (1757-1830) is generally remembered for his weird poems about the spiritual world, some of his best and less obscure poetry contains passages showing a joyful intimacy with nature and a thoughtful consideration for some of

her aspects. Swinburne, in speaking of the new Wordsworthian school of poetry, says that it was "actually founded at midnight by William Blake and fortified at sunrise by William Wordsworth."\* The statement, if somewhat extravagant, nevertheless has much of truth in it. Blake catches, in some respects much of the feeling for nature which impregnates the "Lyrical Ballads". Especially noteworthy is his sympathetic understanding of the living creatures of nature, and a feeling of kinship with them. In "Song", (1783), the poet identifies himself with a bird. He tells of his joyful life amid beautiful nature, of his capture and confinement by man, and of his rage and unhappiness:

"He loves to sit and hear me sing;  
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;  
Then stretches out my golden wing,  
And mocks my loss of liberty."

20 In another poem<sup>2</sup> the writer imagines himself lying on the grass, witnessing the life drama of an emmet which has lost his way. So intimate and sensitive is the poet's feeling for nature, and so acute his imagination, that he thinks he hears and understands the conversation between the emmet and a glow-worm which makes its appearance and directs the wanderer. Blake's poems are the record of a super-imagination; and herein lies one great difference between Wordsworth and Blake. Wordsworth's philosophy of nature is based on observation and contemplation; Blake's is based mainly on imagination. From observation and contemplation Wordsworth feels the existence of a conscious soul pervading all nature, a soul which reveals a divine message. Blake, in imagination, projects himself and his human emotional reactions

\* Halleck, R.P.: English Literature, p. 356.

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into individual creatures of nature, such as the emmet and the bird, and from so-doing he reads various lessons from them; but he is not conscious of the existence of that universal soul.

The last poet to be considered before coming to Wordsworth is William Cowper (1731-1800). Although not a great poet in his spontaneous overflow of feelings, vital and original, if not powerful, and in his real love of nature, Cowper anticipates Wordsworth. He feels a sense of kinship with all living creatures and makes them his teachers and friends. In "The Swallow" he says:

"I am fond of the swallow- I learn from her flight;  
Had I skill to improve it a lesson of love."

Running through a good part of Cowper's greatest work, "The Task", is a feeling for the glories of nature and the thought that man is mostly truly happy and virtuous when closely associated with her.

"God made the country, and man made the town,  
What wonder then, that health and virtue, gifts  
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught  
That life holds out to all, should most abound  
And least be threaten'd in the fields and groves?"\*

The soothing power of nature was keenly felt by Cowper:

---"Scenes that soothed  
Or claim'd me young, no longer young, I feel  
Still soothing, and of power to claim me still."\*\*

and again:

"The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns."\*\*\*

Here Cowper's soul is soothed by "scenes" of nature, by the sight of pleasant landscapes and bright flowers.

- \* "The Task" - Book I
- \*\* Ibid. - Book I
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Rural sounds as well as sights influence the poet:

"Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds  
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore  
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds  
That sweep the skirt of some far-sweeping wood  
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike  
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,  
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind."\*

In this passage, as elsewhere, Cowper shows his extreme susceptibility to the external world. It is not, as with Wordsworth, the spiritual "voice" of all nature speaking to him; it is instead the simple, physical sounds of nature which exhilarate and restore his spirit.

Cowper had a love for nature which is much like Wordsworth's; and like Wordsworth he sees always the good and the beautiful in her. In addressing a friend he says:

"Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,  
And that my raptures are not conjured up  
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,  
But genuine."- \*\*

He thinks of the works of nature as far more completely beautiful than the works of man. A man-made picture appeals solely to the eye; one of nature's scenes appeals directly to the other senses as well:

"Lovely indeed the mimic works of Art,  
But Nature's work far lovelier.

-----

But imitative strokes can do no more  
Than please the eye - sweet Nature every sense,  
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,  
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,  
And music of her woods - no works of man  
May rival these; these all bespeak a power  
Peculiar and exclusively her own.  
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast;  
'Tis free to all - 'tis every day renew'd."\*\*\*

\* "The Task" Book I

\*\* Ibid. - Book I

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Rural sounds as well as sights influence the poet:

"Not rural sights alone, but rural sounds  
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore  
The sense of land's beauty. Mighty winds  
That sweep the skirts of some far-sweeping wood  
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike  
The dash of oars on his winding shore,  
And fill the spirit while they fill the mind."\*

In this passage, as elsewhere, Cowper shows his extreme susceptibility to the external world. It is not, as with Wordsworth, the spiritual "voice" of all nature speaking to him; it is instead the simple, physical sounds of nature which exhilarate and restore his spirit.

Cowper had a love for nature which is much like Wordsworth's; and like Wordsworth he sees always the good and the beautiful in her. In addressing a friend he says:

"I don't knowst my praise of nature most sincere,  
And that my raptures are not confined up  
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,  
But genuine." -

He thinks of the works of nature as far more completely beautiful than the works of man. A man-made picture appeals solely to the eye; one of nature's scenes appeals directly to the other senses as well:

"lovely indeed the mimic works of Art,  
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Than please the eye - sweet Nature every sense,  
The air, the light, the soft, the lofty hills,  
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,  
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A number of Cowper's ideas about nature correspond, in a general and somewhat diluted manner, to thoughts which were to be presented by Wordsworth a number of years later. In Cowper's sympathetic understanding of animals, in his spontaneous reveling in the joy and beauty of nature, and in his realization of her soothing and dynamic influence over man - Cowper is foreshadowing some of the most important concepts of Wordsworth's nature doctrine. But for completeness of treatment and depth of feeling Cowper's nature poetry cannot compare with Wordsworth's. His reactions to nature are inspired merely by her outward manifestations; he fails to catch the mystical murmurings of her universal soul.

All these predecessors of Wordsworth which I have discussed, disclose a decided reaction to the natural world. They have been affected, perhaps, by the spirit of unrest which preceded the French Revolution and which looked upon man and simple nature as good and beautiful. They may portray nature realistically, they may express a love for nature, they may even idealize nature in their passionate enthusiasms, but never do they attain the high spiritual level of Wordsworth's complete nature philosophy.

With the exception of Thomson, Blake, and Cowper, these predecessors rarely consider nature for her own sake; she serves as a setting for human action. They seldom give a soul to nature, they never consider to any marked extent, the spiritual bond between this soul and man's. Wordsworth, with his belief in a continuous and most intimate sort of spiritual relationship between man and nature, strikes a note never before so perfectly sounded in English poetry.

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## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)

In the famous Preface of the 1800 edition of "Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth makes a few definite statements regarding his feeling for nature. In explaining why humble and rustic life is the subject of his poems, he states as his last reason that "in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." Here is an expression of his belief in the fusion of the soul of man with that of nature. He further states that "man and nature are essentially adapted to each other", and he thinks of the "mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature". This spiritual unity of man and nature is further emphasized by his statement that the passions, thoughts and feelings of men are connected not only with moral sentiments and animal sensations, but with the causes which excite these - "with the operation of the elements, and the appearance of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolution of the seasons, with cold and heat". In answering his own question, What is a poet? he says among other things that he is a man "pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in living, delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe". Wordsworth is thinking of the "goings-on of the universe," or nature, as consciously experiencing the same impulses and emotions as mankind. He is giving a soul to nature - not a lifeless, artificially created soul - but one which is just as real as man's. In the perfect revelation of a conscious

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soul permeating all nature, of the mystical relationship between the soul of nature and that of humanity, and of the fundamental unity of all living things, we get the essentials as well as the distinguishing points of superiority, of Wordsworth's conception of nature as found in "Lyrical Ballads".

The following passages taken from poems found in "Lyrical Ballads" show how thoroughly Wordsworth carried out his theories expressed in the Preface. From "Michael" come lines illustrating his belief in the interplay of the human and the natural mind;

"And hence this Tale while I was yet a boy  
Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
Of nature, by the gentle agency  
Of natural objects, led me on to feel  
For passions that were not my own, and think  
(At random and imperfectly indeed)  
On man, the heart of man, and human life."\*

The youthful poet, in some mysterious way, feels the power of nature's spirit. It introduces him to a wholly new set of emotional experiences and to a field of speculation which embraces "man, the heart of man, and human life." He is carried out of himself into a new world filled with ecstatic interest.

The first of his "Poems on the Naming of Places" contains these beautiful and significant lines which attest to his belief in a spiritual communion between all nature - a communion which embraces the mind of man:

"It was an April morning; fresh and clear  
The rivulet, delighting in its strength,  
Ran with a young man's speed -  
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The stream, so ardent in its course before,  
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all

\* "Michael" lines 27-33

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The first of his "poems on the Waning of the Year" contains those beautiful and significant lines which attest to his belief in a spiritual communion between all nature - a communion which embraces the mind of man:

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Ran with a young man's speed -  
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The stream, so ardent in the course before,  
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all

Which till then had heard appeared the voice  
 Of common pleasure, beast and bird, the lamb,  
 The shepherd's dog, the linnet, and the thrush,  
 Vied with this waterfall, and made a song  
 Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth  
 Or like some natural produce of the air,  
 That could not cease to be."\*

Wordsworth believed that a continual interchange of moods is effected by the different natural elements working on each other. The April morning is cheerful and bright; a rivulet catches the spirit and sends forth music of delight; then contagiously the birds and animals pick up the refrain and all pour forth their joyous songs; finally man is similarly affected by these sights and sounds which are "like some natural produce of the air". So close is this spiritual kinship between nature and man that both talk the same language; both are subject to the same influences and experience the same reactions.

Another important poem for our study is "Lines Written in Early Spring". Here Wordsworth is contrasting the joyous rapture of the flowers and animals to the sordid worldliness of humanity. He feels his soul bound by sympathetic ties to nature's joy and love, and regrets that all humanity is not equally happy:

"I heard a thousand blended notes

-----  
 To her fair works did Nature link  
 The human soul that in me ran;  
 -----

Through primrose tufts in that green bower,  
 The periwinkle trailed its wreaths,  
 And 'tis my faith that every flower  
 Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,  
 Their thoughts I cannot measure:-  
 But the least motion which they made,  
 It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

\* "Poems on the Naming of Places" I - lines 1-3, 22-29

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The budding twigs spread out their fan,  
To catch the breezy air,  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?"

In this poem is perfectly illustrated Wordsworth's belief that all living things in the universe are subject to the same volitions and passions. Flowers, birds, trees- all of nature's children- find conscious happiness in living.

And finally, in "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", we get the full sweep of Wordsworth's power. This poem is the compendium of his whole nature philosophy:

"For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity.  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye and ear,- both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my present thoughts, the muse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being".

The poet feels an existent spiritual force animating all nature and incorporating all her forms. He is stirred to the depths of

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The poet feels an existent spiritual force animating all nature  
and incorporating all her forms. He is stirred to the depths of

his soul by communion with this force. While Cowper was stirred by her outer expressions - her green fields, singing birds, and murmuring streams - Wordsworth is influenced by something far deeper and more powerful. His thoughts are disturbed by a "presence", the spiritual embodiment of nature's universal soul. From this spirit of "something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns", he derives a sublime serenity, a sense of security as he acknowledges nature as his moral guide and spiritual healer.\*

Summarizing, Wordsworth's philosophy of nature is, broadly speaking, pantheistic. He conceives of man and all other living things of nature as being included in one unified scheme of things. Nature, herself, is pervaded by a soul to which man's is perfectly attuned. This sympathetic spiritual bond existing between the two allows man to receive influences from nature. Nature, endowed with a consciousness, is actuated by the spirit of joy, love, and morality. By her agency man is taught moral wisdom and spiritual insight; he is healed and comforted. Since all nature is good, man should respect and love even the meanest of her creatures.

From my discussion of Wordsworth it should be clear to what extent his philosophy of nature transcends that of his predecessors. In certain respects, to be sure, his ideas correspond roughly with such poets as Burns, Blake, and Cowper. That is to be expected. But he so far surpasses them in scope, in creative imagination, and in profundity, that his distinctive characteristics are unmistakable. In portraying the unity of all living things, in investing nature with a soul which is continually communing

\* Three other poems, "To My Sister", "Expostulation and Reply", and "The Tables Turned" further illustrate Wordsworth's belief in the guiding and soothing power of nature over man.

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with man, and in revealing the influence which this spiritual intimacy with nature exerts on man, we have qualities which certainly had not been emphasized before in English poetry.

There can be no doubt that Wordsworth, as the exponent of a new and inspirational nature philosophy, exerted a far-reaching effect upon succeeding English poetry. Just how immediate was this effect, and how definitely it may be observed in the works of English poets writing in the next twenty years is somewhat problematical. There is little satisfactory critical material on the subject. We have a few comments concerning the degree of Wordsworth's immediate popularity. They might be expected to indicate in a general way the extent of his contemporary influence. In 1817 Coleridge says: "Year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds."\* Rannie states that "The discipleship of Wilson and DeQuincey to 'Lyrical Ballads' did not represent any large section of critical opinion about Wordsworth. During at least the first quarter of the century Wordsworth entirely failed to win popularity among the general poetry reading and poetry buying public.--But though the public neglected him the narrower critical world was stirred from the outset."\*\* On the other hand Brandes remarks that "from 1800 to 1820 his (Wordsworth's) poetry was trodden underfoot,"\*\*\* and Thomas DeQuincey says that in 1800 he alone "in all Europe" was quoting from Wordsworth.\*\*\*\*

\* "Biographia Literaria": Chap. XIV, p. 368, 369.

\*\* Rannie - "Wordsworth and his Circle" - p. 195.

\*\*\* Brandes, G. - "Main Currents in English Literature": Vol. IV, p. 52

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In speaking of the lesser poets writing in the early nineteenth century George Saintsbury observes that "Despite individual tendencies to imitation all of the minor poets show a general air of sheep without a shepherd. Even their elder contemporaries, from Wordsworth downward were fully comprehended by few of them."\* Only one of these critics, the sanguinary Coleridge, goes so far as to definitely ascribe any degree of popularity to Wordsworth during the years 1800 to 1820. Rannie more cautiously avers that the "narrower critical world was stirred." DeQuincey and Brandes will not admit that Wordsworth enjoyed any contemporary approbation, while Saintsbury, speaking merely about the minor poets, feels that with possibly a very few exceptions they did not even understand him.

Irrespective of whether or not Wordsworth's poetry was popular, the fact remains that "Lyrical Ballads" was well known and much discussed. The publication of this volume did stir literary England. The work was ridiculed and condemned. The scant praise which it received was tempered by fault-finding. But it was not ignored. I think we should probably be safe in saying that every contemporary poet in England knew of Wordsworth and was familiar with the contents of "Lyrical Ballads".

\* Cambridge History of English Literature - Vol. XII, Chap.V, p.153.

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## BODY OF DISQUISITION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

In attempting to determine what influence, if any, Wordsworth's nature doctrine had on Samuel Taylor Coleridge, we are confronted with an unusual situation. For the three years preceding the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" the two poets had been the closest of friends, and had discussed at length and very seriously their theories of poetry. They had determined to publish "Lyrical Ballads" working in collaboration. In "Biographia Literaria" Coleridge mentions the fact that many of the poetic principles (he does not say which ones) set forth in the 1798 Preface had been discussed thoroughly by Wordsworth and himself.

It is difficult to determine which of these poets had the greater influence on the other. Both were undoubtedly greatly stimulated by their association. The personalities of the two were strangely contrasted. Of the two Wordsworth's was the stronger, more independent and self-centered nature. By temperament he was loath to acknowledge any authority other than his own. He gives no hint in any of his writings as to what part Coleridge played in formulating the nature doctrines which "Lyrical Ballads" made famous. Coleridge, on the other hand, was of a more amenable, vacillating, warm-hearted, generous nature. He idolized his friend, spoke of him as the "Giant Wordsworth", as his "teacher" and "inspirer", as the greatest poet since Milton.

These facts lead us to conclude that it was, in all probability, Wordsworth's dominant influence during their

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discussions which inspired Coleridge to express certain ideas on nature in poems written before "Lyrical Ballads", poems which I shall discuss briefly. In this period, the years 1797 and 1798, he wrote the following poems, which, I think, show clearly the influence of his association with Wordsworth: "This Lime Tree Bower", "The Dungeon", "Fears in Solitude", "Frost at Midnight", and "The Nightingale."

In both "This Lime Tree Bower" (1797) and "The Dungeon" (1797) Coleridge considers nature as exerting a soothing, restorative influence over man. In the former the poet, inconsolable at being left alone, finds comfort in nature. In the latter the poet contrasts the means used by man and nature in dealing with an unruly spirit. A criminal, thrown into prison, is permanently ruined; a criminal, subject to nature's healthful influence, is reformed:

"With other ministrations thou, O Nature!  
Healest thy wandering and distempered child.  
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,  
Thy sunny hues, fair forms and breathing sweets,  
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,  
Till he relent."

"Fears in Solitude" (composed early in 1798) describes the dynamic power which nature exerts on a man who is surrounded by her beauty:

"Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame,  
And he with many feelings, many thoughts,  
Made up a meditative joy"-  
and found

"Religious messings in the forms of nature."

In "Frost at Midnight" (also composed early in 1798) Coleridge thinks of a child as comprehending "sounds intelligible

discussions which showed Coleridge to express certain ideas on nature in poems written before "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", poems which I shall discuss briefly. In this period, the years 1797 and 1798, he wrote the following poems, which, I think, show clearly the influence of his association with Wordsworth: "This Lime Tree Bower", "The Tunnocks", "Fears in Solitude", "Frost at Midnight", and "The Nightingale". In both "This Lime Tree Bower" (1797) and "The Tunnocks" (1797) Coleridge considers nature as exerting a soothing, restorative influence over man. In the former the poet, alone, concludes as being left alone, finds comfort in nature. In the latter the poet contrasts the means used by man and nature in dealing with an unruly spirit. A criminal, thrown into prison, is permanently ruined; a criminal, subject to nature's beneficial influence, is reformed:

"With other ministrations then, O Nature!  
Hearst thy wandering and dispersed child,  
Thou poorest on him thy soft influences,  
Thy sunny hues, late forms and breathing sweets,  
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters,  
Till he relent."

"Fears in Solitude" (composed early in 1798) describes the dynamic power which nature exerts on a man who is surrounded by her beauty:

"Sweet influences breathed o'er his frame,  
And he with many feelings, many thoughts,  
Made up a meditative 'joy' -  
and found  
"Religious meanings in the forms of nature."

In "Frost at Midnight" (also composed early in 1798) Coleridge thinks of a child as comprehending "countless intelligible

of that eternal language" (of nature) and as being taught thereby. And in "The Nightingale" (1798- published in "Lyrical Ballads") the poet considers the nightingale's song, as everything else in nature, as filled with a joyousness and love which is communicated to man. He speaks of

"Nature's sweet voices, always full of love  
And joyance!"

and feels that the poet would do well to surrender his whole spirit "to the influxes of shapes and sounds and shifting elements".

It will be remarked that although the poems mentioned by no means reflect Wordsworth's complete nature philosophy, they do, nevertheless, express a number of his well-known ideas on nature and her influence on man.

Strangely enough only two of Coleridge's poems written between 1800 and 1820 could be found which might seem to show the influence of Wordsworth's nature doctrine on his friend. The first of these, "Dejection, an Ode" (1802), is interesting in that Coleridge here is apparently challenging Wordsworth's assertion that man's soul, by a "wise passiveness", can receive at any time spiritual sustenance from nature. Coleridge contends that only when man's soul is joyfully harmonized with nature's can he be affected by her. Then

"Those sounds (of nature) which oft have raised  
me while they awed  
And sent my soul abroad,  
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,  
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!"

But since (in this case) the poet's mood is not attuned to nature's no consolation can be derived from her. This poem certainly does not show discipleship to Wordsworth's ideas although it may signify indirectly that Coleridge had been stimulated by a

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of Wordsworth's nature doctrine on his mind. The first of these,  
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Then  
"Those sounds (of nature) which oft have raised  
me while they were"

And sent my soul abroad,  
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,  
Might stir this dull brain, and make it move and live!"

But since (in this case) the poet's mood is not returned to nature's  
no connection can be derived from her. This poem certainly does  
not show dissimilarity to Wordsworth's ideas although it may  
slightly indirectly that Coleridge had been stimulated by a

contemplation of Wordsworth's philosophy.

Finally, in Coleridge's poem, "To Nature" (1815), we see that seventeen years after the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" he considers nature (somewhat more doubtfully than in a few of his earlier poems) as a source of inspiration and joy to the human soul:

"It may indeed be phantasy, when I  
 Essay to draw from all created things  
 Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings,  
 And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie.  
 Lessons of love and earnest piety."

There is no doubt in Wordsworth's mind that he will derive "deep, heartfelt, inward joy" from association with nature. Coleridge, appears to be trying to convince himself of this fact. He is still sounding, however, a Wordsworthian note, if somewhat weakly.

My study of Coleridge shows, I believe, two things: first, that during the two years preceding the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" a period in which Coleridge and Wordsworth were eagerly discussing their theories on different matters, Coleridge, in his poetry, shows strong evidence that he was influenced by a portion of Wordsworth's nature doctrine later set forth in "Lyrical Ballads"; and second, that during the twenty years following the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" Coleridge is influenced very little by these same conceptions.

An illuminating letter written by Coleridge in 1820 may explain why he himself, although earlier he speaks warmly of Wordsworth as his "teacher" and "inspirer", does not breath forth in his poetry written during the years 1800-1820- a more Wordsworthian philosophy. In this letter the mature Coleridge expresses disapproval at the lengths to which Wordsworth's fervor has carried that poet. He feels that Wordsworth is too general and hazy in his

contemplation of Wordsworth's philosophy.  
Finally, in Coleridge's poem, "To Nature" (1815), we see that  
seventeen years after the publication of "Lyrical Ballads" he  
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earlier poems) as a source of inspiration and joy to the human soul:

"It may indeed be phantasy, when I  
Assay to draw from all created things  
Deep, heart-felt, inward joy that closely clings,  
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie,  
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An illuminating letter written by Coleridge in 1830 may  
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disapproval at the legends to which Wordsworth's fervor has carried  
that poet. He feels that Wordsworth is too general and hazy in his

statements as to the effect of nature on man, man's dependence on nature, and the mystic relationship between man, nature, and God:

"I will not conceal from you that this infernal dependency of the human soul on accidents of birthplace and abode; together with the vague, misty, rather than mystic confusion of God with the world, and the accompanying nature-worship, of which the asserted dependence forms a part, is the trait in Wordsworth's poetic works that I most dislike as unhealthy, and denounce as contagious".

Evidently Coleridge, during the years 1800-1820, took good care to avoid the "unhealthy" and "contagious" features of Wordsworth's nature worship, for he obviously did not contract the disease.

#### George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

A comparatively small part of Lord Byron's poetic output concerns nature. In the main his poetry is an expression of his passionate revolt against the proprieties and moral restrictions of the age. A study of Byron's poetry and life furnishes evidence

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George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824)

A comparatively small part of Lord Byron's poetic output  
concerns nature. In the main his poetry is an expression of  
his passionate revolt against the prophecies and moral restrictions  
of the age. A study of Byron's poetry and life furnishes evidence

that, for a time at least, he admired Wordsworth and that during this period his poetic feelings were definitely influenced by Wordsworth's conception of nature. The period referred to is that short summer of 1816, when Byron, ostracized by English society, had taken refuge in Switzerland. During this period the Third Canto of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage", "The Prisoner of Chillon", "The Dream", and "Epistle to Augusta" were written.

Byron's mental state at this time was the result of a number of circumstances. Early in 1816 Lady Byron suddenly left her husband. Byron's reputation in England had never been good, and it was natural that society, having no evidence on either side, should take the part of the wronged wife. Byron was violently denounced by an infuriated people. Virtually forced out of England by public scorn Byron lived for a time near Geneva, amidst the magnificent Swiss Alps. Here he was closely associated with Shelley, a poet for whom Byron had great admiration. Four influences seem to have affected his poetry during this period: first, a hostile society wounding Byron's pride and self-esteem; second, the natural beauty of Switzerland; third, Shelley, with his refining and stimulating sensitiveness to the glory of lake and mountain; fourth, Wordsworth's philosophy of nature - a doctrine already familiar to Byron. Of the first three factors little need be said. Their existence should be recognized in order to understand fully the significance of the fourth. The fourth factor, Wordsworth's philosophy of nature as a direct influence on Byron's poetry of this period, is important for our consideration.

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As an indication of Byron's familiarity with Wordsworth's poetry we have his poem "Churchill's Grave". In an accompanying note Byron frankly states that the poem is an imitation of Wordsworth's style. He furthermore attests to the seriousness of his effort and expresses sincere admiration for Wordsworth's poetic ability. Here is external evidence that Byron was, for a time at least, subject to the influence of Wordsworth.

Alone, exiled from his country and wife and friends by a hostile society, it was only natural that Byron should be eager to grasp at anything furnishing solace. Beautiful nature was at hand, but nature per se was not to be the curative. A soul-satisfying philosophy derived from the contemplation of the wonders of nature was Byron's saviour in this trying summer of 1816. In reaching this philosophic haven Byron was, I believe, guided and inspired by familiarity with Wordsworth's comforting doctrine of the intimate spiritual bonds between man and nature.

Passages from Byron's poetry which show to what extent Wordsworth's philosophy of nature was inculcated in Byron's consciousness are to be found in abundance in the Third Canto of "Childe Harold". In the following lines from that poem a decided similarity to Wordsworth's ideas on the communion of man with nature, and nature's soothing and healthful effect on man, is apparent:

"Where rose the mountain there to him were friends,  
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;  
Where a blue sky, and a glowing clime extends,  
He has the passion and the power to roam;  
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,  
Were unto him companionship; they spake  
A mutual language, clearer than the tone  
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake  
For Nature's pages glass'd by sunbeams on the lake."\*

\* "Childe Harold", Canto III, lines 109-117 (composed in June-July, 1816)

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Alone, exiled from his country and wife and friends by a hostile society, it was only natural that Byron should be eager to grasp at anything furnishing solace. Beautiful nature was at hand, but nature per se was not to be the crutch. A soul-satisfying philosophy derived from the contemplation of the wonders of nature was Byron's savior in this trying summer of 1818. In reaching this philosophy, however, Byron was, I believe, guided and inspired by familiarity with Wordsworth's comforting doctrine of the intimate spiritual bonds between man and nature.

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"Where rose the mountain there to him were friends;  
 Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;  
 Where a blue sky, and a flowing stream extend;  
 He has the grass and the power to roam;  
 The forest, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,  
 Were unto him companionship; they speak  
 A mutual language, clearer than the tone  
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"Childe Harold", Canto III, lines 109-117 (composed Jan-Mar-July, 1818)

Byron finds companionship and love in the desert and the "breaker's foam"; he finds a home, a refuge in nature. Things of nature and man speak a "mutual language", one "clearer than the tone of his land's tongue". This belief in the close spiritual communion binding man and nature in indissoluble ties is a fundamental principle of Wordsworth's philosophy, as is the feeling that nature is a loving and comforting friend.

Denied the sympathetic understanding of society so necessary to a sensitive soul, Byron abandons any hope of fellowship with man, and recognizes his own mind and nature as his only sources of inspiration:

"Away with these, true wisdom's world will be  
Within its own creation, or in thine,  
Maternal Nature!"\*

Byron dismisses worldly considerations and turns to nature for true wisdom. He considers nature as a dynamic force which will guide his thought. It will be recalled that Wordsworth had expressed this same belief in the dynamic power of nature eighteen years before. Wordsworth's was:

"Well pleased to recognize  
In Nature-----  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the muse  
The guide, the guardian of my heart-----"\*\*\*

Wordsworth sincerely believed in the isolation of the individual man in nature and in the complete absorption of man's soul in her. He could not think of himself as being separated in any way from nature; he was a part of her; he lost himself in her. He expresses this feeling as follows:

\* "Childe Harold" Lines 406-8

\*\* "Tintern Abbey", lines 93-95.

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her. He expresses this feeling as follows:

"For Nature then --

-----

To me was all in all, - I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their columns and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite: a feeling and a love!\*

In the following lines from Byron's "Childe Harold" the thought and mood are almost identical with those expressed in the above passage from Wordsworth:

"I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me, and to me  
High mountains are a feeling--"\*\*

He too becomes a part of nature; his soul is absorbed in hers, as was Wordsworth's. Furthermore, the phrasing of parts of the two passages are very much alike. To Wordsworth the "columns" and "forms" of rock, mountain and wood are a feeling. To Byron "high mountains" are a feeling. And later in the same poem Byron asks:

"Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?  
Is not the love of these deep in my heart  
With a pure passion?"\*\*\*

He loves natural objects with a pure passion. Wordsworth says "The sounding cataract haunted me like a passion". Byron reiterates this feeling of oneness with nature, and the fusion of his own personality with her soul.

The following lines, still from the Third Canto of "Childe Harold", might easily be mistaken for Wordsworth at his best. In them the poet shows his sensitive response to the varying moods of nature - a fundamental tenet of Wordsworth:

\* "Tintern Abbey", lines 72 ff.

\*\* "Childe Harold", Canto III, lines 680-682

\*\*\* Ibid. lines 707-710

"For Nature then --  
 -----  
 To me was all in all, - I cannot paint  
 What this I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their columns and their belfries, were then to me  
 An apostle: a feeling and a love!"

In the following lines from Byron's "Child's Harold" the thoughts  
 and mood are almost identical with those expressed in the above  
 passage from Wordsworth:

"I live not in myself, but I become  
 Portion of that around me, and to me  
 High mountains are a feeling!"

He too becomes a part of nature; his soul is absorbed in hers,  
 as was Wordsworth's. Furthermore, the phrasing of parts of the  
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"Tinted Abbey", lines 72-77.  
 "Child's Harold", Canto III, lines 680-682  
 see also lines 704-710

"It is the hush of night, and all between  
 Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,  
 Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen,  
 Save darkened Jura, whose cap heights appear  
 Precipitously steep: and drawing near,  
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,  
 Of flowers yet fresh from childhood; on the ear,  
 Drops the light dip of suspended oar,  
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more--  
 He is an evening reveller, who makes  
 His life an infancy, and sings his fill,--  
 At intervals some bird from out the brakes  
 Starts into voice a moment, then is still.  
 There seems a floating whisper on the hill,  
 But that is fancy for the starlight dew  
 All silently their tears of love instil,  
 Weeping themselves away till they infuse  
 Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues!"\*

Byron feels that not only does man's spirit beat in accord with the beautiful things of nature's creation, but that nature's soul, too, is colored by the various manifestations of all living things. The calm, peaceful beauty of the scene described, the love and unity which pervade it, are harmonious, we are made to feel, with a corresponding mood in the poet. He feels himself a sharer in the evening song of nature. The dusk, the indistinct mountain, the flowers, the grasshopper, the dewdrops, the bird, and the poet himself are all parts of a unified scheme. In the poem Byron again brings out the fact that nature's moods are reflected by man:

"Adieu to thee (Rhine) again! a vain adieu!  
 There can be no farewell to scene like thine;  
 The mind is colored by thy every hue!"--- \*\*

That Byron felt himself to be a "sharer" in nature's moods, and that he exulted in them is evident from the following lines, which, though more exuberant than any of Wordsworth's, are still part of the essential philosophy of that poet:\*\*\*

\* "Childe Harold", Canto III, lines 806-23

\*\* Ibid. lines 572-74

\*\*\* It should be noted that whereas Wordsworth was interested primarily in the calm, peaceful aspects of nature Byron generally treats her in her wilder, darker moods.

"It is the hour of night, and all between  
 The margin and the mountain, dark, yet clear,  
 Mellow and misty, yet distinctly seen,  
 Save between them, whose calm nature appears  
 Presciently steep, and drawing near,  
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,  
 Of flowers yet fresh from childhood; on the ear,  
 Drops the light dip of suspended oar,  
 Or oars the grasshopper can good-night move--  
 He is an evening reveler, who makes  
 His life an answer, and sings his fill,--  
 At intervals come bird from out the bushes  
 Scold into voice a moment, then is still.  
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 All silently their tears of love fall,  
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 poet himself are all parts of a unified scheme. In the poem Byron  
 again brings out the fact that nature's moods are reflected by man:

"Adieu to those (Whine) again! a vain adieu!  
 There can be no farewell to scenes like these;  
 The mind is colored by the very hues!"

That Byron felt himself to be a "sharer" in nature's moods, and  
 that he existed in them is evident from the following lines,  
 which, though more exuberant than any of Wordsworth's, are still  
 part of the essential philosophy of that poet:

"And this is in the night. Most glorious night,  
 Thou wert not sent for slumber, let me be  
 A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,  
 A portion of the tempest and of thee!"\*

Like Wordsworth, Byron gives a soul to nature. In the impassioned apostrophe given below he personifies, in a most intimate way, nature and natural objects, and thinks of them as possessing a consciousness:

"Sky, mountains, rivers, woods, lake, lightnings! Ye  
 With might and clouds, and thunder, and a soul  
 To make thee felt and feeling, well may be  
 Things that have made me watchful!"\*\*

The preceding quotations from Canto Three of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" contain marked parallels in thought and feeling to passages in Wordsworth. Wordsworth himself noticed this similarity and, irritated by what he considered undue forwardness in a younger poet, charged Byron with plagiarism.\*\*\* To this charge Lord John Russell sententiously replied that "if Wordsworth wrote the Third Canto of 'Childe Harold', it is his best work!"

Not only in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" but in a number of Byron's other poems is Wordsworth's influence to be seen. Where, other than in one of his own poems, could we find a better voicing of Wordsworth's feeling for a conscious soul in nature and a merging of this soul with the soul of man, than in Byron's poem, "The Island"?

"How often we forget all time, when love,  
 Admiring Nature's universal throne,  
 Her woods, her wilds, her waters, the intense  
 Reply of hers to our intelligence!  
 Live not the stars and mountains? Are the waves  
 Without a feeling in their silent tears?"

\* "Childe Harold", Canto III, lines 369-72

\*\* Ibid. lines 896-99

\*\*\*

"And this is in the night, Most glorious night,  
 When want not need for slumber, let me be  
 A wanderer in the night and far delight,  
 A portion of the sunset and of light."

Like Wordsworth, Byron gives a soul to nature. In the  
 impassioned apostrophe given below he personifies, in a most  
 intimate way, nature and natural objects, and thinks of them  
 as possessing a consciousness:

"O'er mountains, rivers, woods, fields, lightnings! Ye  
 With might and power, and thunder, and a soul  
 To make them feel and think, well may ye  
 Think that have made us withal!"

The preceding quotations from Byron's "Childs"

Harold's "Pittsburgh" contain marked parallels in thought and  
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 this similarity and, irritated by what he considered undue  
 favoritism in a younger poet, charged Byron with plagiarism.  
 To this charge Lord John Russell sentimentally replied that  
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Not only in "Childs Harold's Pittsburgh" but in a number  
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 nature and a merging of this soul with the soul of man, than in  
 Byron's poem, "The Island?"

"How often we forget all time, when love,  
 Making Nature's universal sphere,  
 Her woods, her wilds, her waters, the intense  
 Unity of life to our intelligence!  
 Live not the stars and mountains? Are the waves  
 Without a feeling in their silent career?"

No, no;- they too woo and clasp us to their spheres,  
Dissolve their clog and clod of clay before  
Its home, and merge our soul in the great shore."

In a speech by Manfred, from Byron's drama of that name, we catch suggestions of Wordsworth's communion with nature and its significance to him:

Manfred: "I linger yet with Nature, for the night  
Hath been to me a more familiar face  
Than that of man, and in her starry shade  
Of dim and solitary loveliness,  
I learn'd the language of another world."\*

From nature Byron learns the "language of another world". New sensations and thoughts have been introduced into his life through the agency of nature. A mystical union exists between his consciousness and hers. Wordsworth speaks this "language of another world" most of his life; he too is continually led on by natural objects to feel "for passions that were not his own".

To Wordsworth nature furnishes material and inspiration for contemplation. He feels in nature "a presence that disturbs (him) with the joy of elevated thoughts".\*\* In the poem, "Epistle to Augusta", Byron expresses the same thought:

"Here are the Alpine landscapes which create  
A fund for contemplation;- to admire  
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;  
But something worthier do such scenes inspire;  
Here to be lonely is not desolate."\*\*\*

Byron, like Wordsworth, has learned to look on nature "not as in the hour of thoughtless youth,";\*\*\*\* admiration of the mere physical beauty of nature is unsatisfactory to him. A fuller realization of its possibilities for the human soul can be

\* "Manfred"-----  
\*\* "Tintern Abbey"  
\*\*\* "Epistle to Augusta", 1816  
\*\*\*\* "Tintern Abbey"

No, no: - they too was and clasp us to their spheres,  
Disjunctive their aim and end of clay below  
Its home, and range our soul in the great arena."

In a speech by Hamilton, from Byron's dream of that scene,  
we catch suggestions of Wordsworth's communion with nature and  
the wilderness to him:

Hamilton: "I linger yet with Nature, for the night  
Hath been to me a more familiar face  
Than that of man, and in her airy shade  
Of dim and solitary loveliness,  
I learn the language of another world."

From nature Byron learns the "language of another world". Her  
sensations and thoughts have been introduced into his life  
through the agency of nature. A natural union exists between  
his consciousness and hers. Wordsworth creates this "language  
of another world" most of his life; he too is continually led  
on by natural objects to feel "for passions that were not his  
own."

To Wordsworth nature furnishes material and inspiration  
for contemplation. He feels in nature "a presence that disturbs  
(him) with the joy of elevated thoughts." In the poem,  
"Epistle to Augusta", Byron expresses the same thought:

"There are the Alpine landscapes which create  
A kind for contemplation; - to what  
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;  
But something worthier do such scenes inspire;  
None so benignly is not desolate."

Byron, like Wordsworth, has learned to look on nature "not as  
in the hour of Englishman youth"; "a mere admiration of the mere  
physical beauty of nature is unsatisfactory to him. A fuller  
realization of its possibilities for the human soul can be

obtained only when it is considered philosophically.

The foregoing material shows clearly a marked similarity between the nature doctrines of Byron and Wordsworth. When Byron expresses a feeling of companionship with nature, when he recognizes a soul in nature, when he shows a belief in a connection between that soul and man's, when he thinks of man's mind as being influenced by this spiritual relationship- in all these cases- we have ideas which are fundamental principles with Wordsworth. It should be remembered that these ideas about nature were first expressed in English poetry by Wordsworth in "Lyrical Ballads"; that when Byron was writing, Wordsworth was an outstanding, if not an especially popular, figure in English poetry; and that his "lyrical Ballads" and poetic theories were well known in literary circles. In addition, Wordsworth, who should have been better able to identify his own thoughts than any one else, charged that Byron appropriated much of the Third Canto of "Childe Harold" from him, a charge which, so far as I can find, has never been refuted. Coincidence or contemporaneousness cannot satisfactorily explain the numerous similarities which exist between this poem and some of Wordsworth's.

In a way it seems strange that Byron, a man whose personality was diametrically the opposite of Wordsworth's, should have been affected to an appreciable extent by the thought expressed in "Lyrical Ballads". Yet the foregoing study indicates that, for a time at least, he was clearly influenced by Wordsworth's nature philosophy. The influence is confined pretty closely to the poems, already mentioned, written in the summer of 1816. That

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poem, already mentioned, written in the summer of 1816. That

Byron, one of the foremost poets of the century, should have been affected by the nature philosophy of Wordsworth, even though for a short time, and that probably the most beautiful poetry which he ever wrote, the Third Canto of "Childe Harold", should have been conceived and executed under the inspiration of Wordsworth, is a great tribute to the power of "Lyrical Ballads."

#### Percy Bysshe Shelly (1792-1822)

When Shelley was but eight years old the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" was published. With the publication of this work the field of nature was recognized as a vital poetic possibility. Wordsworth had thrown open the windows and had let in the fresh air of the mountains and the sea. Nature now was not considered merely as an objective setting- a subject to be treated in the first two stanzas as introduction to a poem and then forgotten. It was now considered a subject worthy of treatment for its own intrinsic qualities.

That the youthful Shelley knew and admired Wordsworth's poetry is known. Mrs. Shelley, in a note on her husband's "Queen Mab", in explaining its composition and more particularly its source of inspiration, writes, "Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown to him. The love and knowledge of Nature developed by Wordsworth - the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge's poetry - and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey - comprised his favorite reading.\* It is a logical supposition that Shelley's instinctive turning to nature was encouraged by his familiarity with

\* Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley - ed. Wm. Rossetti, 1878 - p. 83.

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reading. It is a logical supposition that Shelley's instinctive  
turning to nature was encouraged by his familiarity with

Wordsworth. There is further external evidence that Shelley was influenced by Wordsworth. It is to be found in a prefatory note to "Prometheus Unbound". Although the poem itself contains little of material value for the purposes of this paper, Shelley's note is of great importance. In it the poet shows that he was not oblivious to the fact that he (as well as other writers) was unconsciously influenced necessarily by the thoughts and feelings of contemporaries. He says:

"One word is due in candor to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my compositions; for such has been a topic of censure with poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the production of these extraordinary intellects". Wordsworth stood undeniably in "the foremost ranks" of poets in Shelley's day, hence it is logical to assert the fact that Shelley recognized the probability of Wordsworth's influence. In view of this external evidence alone it would seem highly probable that in a general way at least, the course of Shelley's thought was partially directed by the emanations of the healthy nature doctrines preached by Wordsworth.

In spite of many instances of similarity between Shelley's poetry and Wordsworth's in which Wordsworth's influence seems to be discernable - instances which will be pointed out later - it is necessary in all fairness to indicate some of the fundamental



differences between these two poets' conception and treatment of nature. First of all, Shelley considered nature as a lover, and addressed it in passionate terms of endearment. Wordsworth, for the most part, considered nature more as an invigorator, a source of inspiration, material for contemplation; he never is so carried away by emotion as to think of her as anything more than a friend. Shelley realized this detached quality of Wordsworth's contemplation of nature, and impatiently jeered at him in "Peter Bell the Third" for what he considered to be Wordsworth's emotional limitations. In this poem Peter, of course, represents Wordsworth:

"But from the first 'twas Peter's drift  
To be a kind of moral eunuch;  
He touched the hem of Nature's skirt,  
Felt faint,- and never dared uplift  
The closest all-concealing tunic"\*

Nature to Shelley was a place of refuge from a harsh and unsympathetic humanity. In describing the essence of love, in a short essay "On Love", he talks of searching for and finally finding "an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own.--- Hence in solitude, or in that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings, and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, the waters, and the sky.--- There is an eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks which bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the voice of one beloved singing to you alone!"\*\* Wordsworth did not think of nature as a place of refuge, for he was in no need of refuge. He sought nature out, rather, as a source of enjoyment and of a more complete life. To Shelley the

\* "Peter Bell the Third" - Part IV, stanza XI. (Comp.1819)

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"But from the first I was Peter's drift  
To be a kind of moral snuff;  
He looked the man of Nature's drift,  
Felt calm, - and never dared uplift  
The closest all-revealing truth."

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the stony calm of nature as it regards human life was benevolence in comparison with man's stupidity and brutality. To Wordsworth, the lover of humanity as well as of nature, man was seldom brutal or stupid; both nature and man were benevolent. Another marked difference between these two poets is to be found in their sources of inspiration. Shelley was not generally inspired to his highest poetry by the flowers of the field or the trees, but by the grand and distant, by the motions of sea or heavens. Wordsworth, on the other hand, wrote some of his greatest poetry on just such subjects as flowers and trees.

A few facts of Shelley's life should be reviewed before an explanation of his nature poetry is attempted. Following his expulsion from Oxford as a result of his tract, "The Necessity for Atheism", and his premature marriage with and subsequent separation from Harriet Westbrook, Shelley found himself, like Byron, practically an outcast from society. This fact, which meant that he was denied the sympathy of his fellowmen, made it natural for him to seek elsewhere for consolation. He turned to Mary Godwin and to nature.

There appears <sup>be</sup> to abundant internal evidence that Wordsworth exerted a potent influence on much of Shelley's nature poetry. Many passages may be shown which bear the definite stamp of Wordsworth's nature philosophy. His (Wordsworth's) pantheism, his belief in a spiritual communion between all sentient things and in divine inspiration to be derived by man from nature, his belief in the essential goodness of nature, are all to be found in Shelley.

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in Shelley.

First let us consider Shelley's poem "Alastor: or the Spirit of Solitude", rightly called by Mrs. Shelley one of her husband's most characteristic works.\* Written in 1815, this poem contains passages which closely resemble the pantheistic ideas of Wordsworth:

"Earth, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!  
 If our great mother has imbued my soul  
 With aught of natural piety to feel  
 Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;  
 If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,  
 With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,  
 And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;  
 If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,  
 And winter robing with pure snow and crowns  
 Of starry ice and gray grass and bare boughs -  
 If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes  
 Her first sweet kisses - have been dear to me;  
 If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,  
 I consciously have injured, but still loved  
 And cherished these my kindred,- then forgive  
 This boast beloved brethren, and withdraw  
 No portion of your wonted favor now!"\*\*

Shelley feels himself and all living creatures to be a part of one universal brotherhood. To nature, the mother, Shelley addressed his poem, recognizing in the expression of her mysteries and in the fundamental goodness of her children a religious conception of value to mankind. Shelley's pulse, no less than Wordsworth's, beats in mysterious sympathy with nature's. Later in the poem just quoted he expresses thoughts on the relationship between nature and man which are similar to Wordsworth's. Man derives divine inspiration from nature:

"By solemn vision and bright silver dream  
 His infancy was nurtured. Every sight  
 And sound from the vast earth and ambient air  
 Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.  
 The fountains of divine philosophy  
 Fled not his thirsting lips;"---\*\*\*

\* Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley; ed. Wm. Rossetti (1878) p. 94.

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"Earth, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!  
 It was thy mother's hand that laid me down  
 With such of nature's gifts as thou  
 Thy love, and nurtured me the bosom mine;  
 It drew me, and it drew me, and even  
 With sorrow and its various ministrations,  
 And solemn midnight's lingering silences;  
 It taught me to be lonely in the same wood,  
 And winter nothing with pure snow and crown  
 Of starry ice and grey grass and bare bushes -  
 It taught me to be lonely when the breeze  
 Her first sweet kisses - have been dear to me;  
 It no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,  
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"By solemn vision and bright silver dream  
 His life was nurtured. Every night  
 And sound from the vast earth and emulous air  
 Sent to his heart its choicest treasures.  
 The fountain of divine philosophy  
 Was not his solitary light!"

The "choicest impulses" of nature exert a dynamic power on man, allowing him to drink of a "divine philosophy". From her man gets material for philosophical contemplation; he derives thereby religious sustenance. Just so Wordsworth was led on by the "gentle agency of natural objects -- for passions that were not (his) own".\* And just as Wordsworth was affected by definite facts of nature such as the sight of daffodils in a field, a daisy, or the song of a bird, so Shelley was affected by "every sight and sound from the vast earth and ambient air".

Shelley shows his sense of the mystic relationship between man and nature when he tells of the poet's walk:

"A spirit seemed  
To stand beside him - clothed in no bright robes  
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light  
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords  
Of grace or majesty or mystery;  
But, - undulating woods, and silent well,  
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom  
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,-  
Held commune with him, as if he and it  
Were all that was." \*\*

The woods, well, leaping rivulet, and evening gloom are all combined and seem to find expression in one spirit which "held commune" with the poet. Wordsworth likewise found in nature a "presence" with which he was joined by the closest of spiritual ties:

"And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts." \*\*\*

A feeling very characteristic of Wordsworth was that all living things of this world are capable of, and experience, the

\* "Tintern Abbey"  
\*\* "Alastor", line 477 ff.  
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The "highest influence" of nature exert a dynamic power on man, allowing him to drink of a "divine philosophy". From her we get material for philosophical contemplation; he derives thereby religious sustenance. Just as Wordsworth was led on by the "gentle agency of natural objects -- for passions that were not (his) own". And just as Wordsworth was affected by definite facts of nature such as the sight of daffodils in a field, a daisy, or the song of a bird, so Shelley was affected by "every sight and sound from the vast earth and ambient air".

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Heid converse with him, as if he and it  
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"And I have felt  
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A feeling very characteristic of Wordsworth was that all living things of this world are capable of, and experience, the

same emotions. To him birds, flowers and trees are filled in the springtime with just such joy as is in the heart of man at that time. A quotation from his familiar "Lines Written in Early Spring" shows this:

-----  
 "And 'tis my faith that every flower  
 enjoys the air it breathes--

The birds around me hopped and played,  
 Their thoughts I cannot measure;-  
 But the least motion which they made,  
 It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fans,  
 To catch the breezy air.  
 And I must think, do all I can,  
 That there was pleasure there."\*

Shelley evinces this same feeling in "The Sensitive Plant":

"A sensitive plant in the garden grew;  
 And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
 And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
 And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

-----  
 But none ever trembled and panted with bliss  
 In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,  
 Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,  
 As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

-----  
 But the Sensitive Plant, which could give small fruit  
 Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,  
 Received more than all; it loved more than ever,  
 Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver:-

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;  
 Radiance and odor are not its dower;  
 It loves even like Love,--its deep heart is full;  
 It desired what it has not, the beautiful."\*\*

The resemblance of thought and feeling of the above two passages is obvious. Wordsworth believes that "every flower enjoys the

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\*\* "The Sensitive Plant"- stanzas I,III,XVIII,XIX.

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air it breathes", that birds thrill with pleasure, and that there is happiness even in the twigs of trees. Shelley is equally certain that the sensitive plant and the doe experience ecstatic delight which amounts to a conscious reveling in sensuous enjoyment. The tone of these two passages is also similar, both being marked by simplicity, happiness, and love. Shelley expresses more briefly this same conviction that all living things experience emotions of love and happiness in the following lines:

"The breath of the moist earth is light  
Around its unexpanded buds;  
Like many a voice of one delight,  
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods;"\*

It should be remembered that Wordsworth in "Lyrical Ballads" was the first English poet to stress the point that all life, both animal and vegetable, consciously experiences emotions such as man experiences. Now Shelley is emphasizing the same point; his winds and birds and ocean floods are subject to conscious emotional reactions of a similar nature.

Well-nigh conclusive evidence of Wordsworth's influence on Shelley is to be found in Shelley's "Queen Mab", a poem written when the author was eighteen years old. This poem, rabidly atheistic and in many respects immature, contains thoughts and even expressions which are closely modeled after some to be found in Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring", which has already been quoted. As I have previously mentioned, Mrs. Shelley, in her introduction to "Queen Mab" comments on the fact that Shelley, at the time of composition, had read practically none of the earlier English poetry but that his love of nature had been developed by Wordsworth.

\* "Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples".

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It seems plain that the young and impressionable Shelley turned to the composition of "Queen Mab" fresh from reading "Lyrical Ballads".

One of the main thoughts running through "Queen Mab" is almost identical with the principal thought in "Lines Written in Early Spring". It is that in the midst of a beautiful and harmonious natural world, man, through his greed, his cruelty, and his commercialism has heaped damnation upon his own head. Man, naturally good, is corrupted through his relations with other men:

"Hath Nature's soul  
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread  
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord  
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave  
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,  
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep  
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,  
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust  
With spirit, thought and love,- on Man alone;  
Partial in careless malice, wantonly  
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery? his soul  
Blasted with withering curses, placed afar  
The meteor happiness that shuns his grasp  
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,  
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature! - no!

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower  
Even in its tender bud, their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society.

-----The Universe

In Nature's silent eloquence, declares  
That all fulfill the works of love and joy,-  
All but the outcast, Man."\*

Nature and her works are fundamentally good; man, and man-made institutions, are bad. Shelley asks whether nature's soul has wantonly heaped "ruin, vice, and slavery" on man and has deprived him of happiness. Then in violent invective he answers

\* "Queen Mab".

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All but the ocean, Man."  
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Of desolate society.  
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The water happiness that stuns his grasp  
Bleated with withering curses, placed afar  
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery his soul  
Parted in careless mists, wand'ring  
With spirit, thought and love, - on Man alone;  
And filled the meadow with that crowd in dust  
The lovely silence of the untroubled main,  
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep,  
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,  
Strung to unchanging music, that gave  
Rapture's lap with plenty, and life's earliest chord  
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread  
"With Nature's soul"

relations with other men:

Man, naturally good, is corrupted through his  
crusely, and his commercialism has heaped damnation upon his  
and pernicious natural world, man, through his greed, his  
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almost identical with the principal thought in "Lines Written  
One of the main thoughts running through "Queen Mab" is  
Salute".

to the composition of "Queen Mab" fresh from reading "Lyrical  
It seems plain that the young and impressionable Shelley turned

that not nature, but "kings, priests, and statesmen" are responsible for man's sad state. Compare Shelley's thought with that in the concluding stanza of Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring", which contains the essence of the poem:

"If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?"\*

Shelley's stanzas which are quoted are merely an elaboration of the above quatrain of Wordsworth. Both poets are, of course, quoting Rousseau - Wordsworth directly, and Shelley, in all probability, through the medium of Wordsworth. Incidentally, these two passages furnish an interesting contrast between the temperaments of the two men, both of whom are expressing the identical thought. Wordsworth is controlled, dignified, and comparatively unimpassioned; we think of him as sadly shaking his head as he penned the lines. Shelley is impulsive, scathing, and violent; we imagine him as punctuating his sentences by angrily shaking his fist.

I shall give only two of the many other examples of parallel feeling for nature to be found in "Queen Mab" and "Lyrical Ballads". The idea contained in the following lines is one repeatedly expressed by Wordsworth:

"Yet not the meanest worm  
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead  
Less shares thy eternal breath."\*\*

The poet thinks of all living creatures as sharing in a universal system of things and as being infused with the same spiritual

\* "Lines Written in Early Spring"  
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"Yet not the meanest worm  
That licks the grass and fattens on the dead  
Less shares thy eternal breath."

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system of things and as being infused with the same spiritual

"Lines Written in Early Spring"  
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reality. The worm no less than man partakes of this soul of nature. In this reverence for the spiritual element in all animal existence, Shelley's feelings resemble Wordsworth's expressed belief in pantheism.

Another passage from the same poem reiterates this pantheistic conception. Shelley is awed by the realization that the same passions, interests and prejudices are common to all living things and cause similar reactions, thus forming a universal bond between all nature:

"How wonderful that even  
The passions, prejudices, interests  
That sway the meanest being, the weak tough  
That moves the finest nerve,  
And in one human brain  
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link  
In the great chain of Nature!" \*

In a passage such as this the reader cannot fail to feel that Shelley is identifying the "great chain of Nature" with God, and that he <sup>is</sup> directed to this conception by Wordsworth.

The only other poem of Shelley' to which I shall refer is "Mont Blanc". In a note on the poem the author says: "It was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe." In this poem there is a clear parallel to the idea so often expressed by Wordsworth: That man is definitely influenced by nature, and that there is a very real communion between the soul of man and the soul of nature. These ideas are repeated many times in the poem:

\* "Queen Mab"---

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\* "Queen Mab" ---

"The everlasting universe of Things  
 Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
 Now dark,- now glittering -now reflecting gloom-  
 Now lending splendor, where from secret springs  
 The source of human thought its tribute brings  
 Of waters,

-----

And when I gaze on thee, (Ravine of Arve)  
 I seem as in a trance, sublime and strange,  
 To muse on my own separate phantasy,  
 My own, my human Mind, which passively  
 Now renders and receives fast influencings,  
 Holding an unremitting interchange  
 With the clear universe of things around."\*

Shelley feels that man's moods and thoughts are subject to the external expression of nature's self. As the poet gazes on the Ravine of Arve his mind "renders and receives fast influencings" as it holds "an unremitting interchange with the clear universe of Things around". Man's mind, in close spiritual communion with nature is definitely influenced thereby.

Wordsworth has expressed the idea that "man and nature are essentially adapted to each other," \*\* and that the passions and thoughts of man are connected not only with moral sentiment and mind sensations but with the causes exciting them- "with the operation of the elements, and the appearance of the visible universe;\*\*\* he is

"Well pleased to recognize  
 In nature and the language of the sense  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the muse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul,  
 Of all my moral being."\*\*\*\*

To Wordsworth, nature is a religion; its soul serves as a foundation for his moral life and spiritual well-being. Shelley feels a mysterious presence in the forces of nature which is likewise ("for the wise and great and good"\*\*\*\*\*) a spiritual guide:

\* "Mont Blanc"  
 \*\* Preface "Lyrical Ballads" 1800  
 \*\*\* Ibid  
 \*\*\*\* "Tintern Abbey" \*\*\*\*\* "Mont Blanc"

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Preface "Poetical Beliefs" 1800

"The Wilderness has a mysterious tongue  
Which teaches awful doubt,- or faith so mild,  
So solemn, so serene, that Man may be,  
But for such faith, with Nature reconciled.  
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood  
By all, but which the wise and great and good  
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel." \*

Just as Wordsworth has felt the dynamic moral power of nature, so Shelley feels the mighty voice of the mountain which can "repel large codes of fraud and woe".

Summarizing, Wordsworth's feeling for nature appears to have influenced Shelley in two ways: first, in a general way it helped to direct Shelley's youthful thoughts and interests to nature as a source of refuge and sympathy; second, it furnished definite ideas about nature which Shelley accepted and incorporated as part of his own philosophy about nature. Many instances of similarity of thought and feeling for nature have been pointed out. Wordsworth's pantheism, his belief in the transmission of divine inspiration through nature to man, his feeling for the mystical communion between man and nature, his idea that "every flower enjoys the air it breathes";\*\* his indignation at the shortcomings of man living in the midst of a harmonious nature,- all these ideas about nature are to be found repeatedly in Shelley's poetry. It seems probable that so many instances of similarity are due to but one thing: Shelley had absorbed a very tangible portion of the Wordsworthian nature doctrine.

One final point should be made before the consideration of Shelley is dropped. Whereas Wordsworth's influence on Byron was

\* "Mont Blanc"

\*\* "Lines Written in Early Spring"

"The wilderness has a mysterious tongue  
Which teaches awful doubt, - or faith so mild,  
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The final point should be made before the consideration of  
Shelley is dropped. Whereas Wordsworth's influence on Byron was

for a very short period, his influence on Shelley was for a comparatively long period. With a few exceptions Byron's poems written in the summer of 1816 are the only ones which show any appreciable influence of Wordsworth. Wordsworth's influence on Shelley, however, covers a period of eight years at least - beginning with "Queen Mab" (1813) and continuing to "The Sensitive Plant" (1820).

#### John Keats (1795-1821)

Another great poet who wrote between 1800 and 1820 is John Keats. George Brandes in his book, "Main Currents in 19th Century Literature", states that Keats "turned his eyes steadily and quite reverently on Wordsworth".\* It is very possible that he did, for he wrote much about nature, considering her various aspects as a true source of poetic inspiration. He asks:

"For what made the sage or poet write  
But the fair Paradise of Nature's light?"\*\*

Through his familiarity with Wordsworth's poetry he undoubtedly learned to appreciate more fully the external beauties of nature. But Wordsworth was not interested primarily in her external beauty. His feeling for nature was something deeper; he felt the spiritual beauty of a universal soul in nature which was perfectly attuned to man's. Keats was not a thoughtful poet. There is to be found in his poetry no evidence of this deeper feeling for nature which is the essence of Wordsworth's nature philosophy. Keats rarely, if ever, suggests the presence - so real and so full of awe to Wordsworth - of a mighty impulse and

\* Brandes, George - "Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature" P.132

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everlasting purpose behind the life which is in living things. Keats was a loving observer of nature, and caught those half-hidden bits of magic which we seldom see;

"Here are sweet peas, on tiptoe for a flight  
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,  
And taper fingers catching at all things,  
To bind them all about with tiny rings."\*

He sees minnows in a brook:

"-- how they ever wrestle  
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle  
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand."\*\*

He writes of

"The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."\*\*\*

and of the spring -

"While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;"\*\*\*\*

In passages such as these we see his reverence for nature's wonders and his sensuous treatment of her external aspects. He himself sums up his reactions to nature when he writes:

"But when, O wells! thy roses came to me,  
My sense with their deliciousness was fill'd.\*\*\*\*\*

There should be noted, however, two poems, - the only ones which I found- which might seem to show a more Wordsworthian attitude toward nature. The first is a sonnet, "On the Grasshopper and Cricket". The grasshopper, singing in the hottest part of summer, and the cricket, chirping behind the stove in the winter-time, carry on the continual song coming from nature:

"The poetry of earth is never dead;  
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;"

\* "I Stood Tiptoe upon a Little Hill"

\*\* Ibid

\*\*\* "Ode to a Nightingale"

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"Here are sweet home, on lips for a flight  
With wings of gentle fish or delicate white,  
And tender fingers catching at all things,  
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He sees himself in a brook:

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"The coming mark-moss, fall of dewy wine,  
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When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
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From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;"

"I stood tip-toe upon a little hill"

Idid

"Ole to a Whistling"

Idid

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It might be asserted that the "poetry of earth" is a comprehensive term and refers to a spiritual quality or soul running through all nature. The assertion would probably be wrong. Keats, in speaking of the "poetry of earth", is referring to definite and tangible sounds, such as the chirping of the grasshopper and the cricket. He is not concerned with any philosophical considerations of the subject.

In two of the stanzas of "Endymion" Keats speaks of the influence of beautiful natural objects on the senses and the soul of man:

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

-----  
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth.

-----  
Yes, in spite of all,  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,  
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils  
With the green world they live in;"--

-----  
Nor do we merely feel these essences  
For one short hour; no, even as the trees  
That whisper round a temple become soon  
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,  
The passion poesy, glories infinite,  
Haunt us till they become a cheering light  
Unto our soul, and bound to us so fast  
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,  
They always must be with us, or we die." \*

At first reading the thoughts here expressed sound like Wordsworth's. After consideration, however, we see that it is not nature which is influencing Keats, but the beauty of nature. With Wordsworth it is an entirely different matter. Having seen daffodils happily dancing in the breeze, Wordsworth goes home, and in thinking over the experience feels a thrill of pleasure as his

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heart dances with them. It is not, (as it is with Keats), the abstract quality of beauty which the flowers possess that thrills Wordsworth; rather it is the sense of actual participation in their ecstasy. He feels a sympathetic response to the innermost soul of the flowers which Keats does not.

There can be found in Keats's poetry, then, no indication of a direct influence of Wordsworth's nature philosophy such as is found in the works of Shelley and Byron. Keats' feeling for nature is totally different from Wordsworth's. The sensuous appeal of the external beauty of nature is to Keats all in all. He loves beauty for itself; it delights his receptive senses until he becomes drunk with nature's beauty; its expression in his poetry is an ecstatic sensuous feast. Wordsworth's poetry, less rich in sense impressions, is richer far in meaning. He finds a deep peace in his spiritual communion with a nature that is not merely beautiful, but tender, friendly, loving.

#### Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

In considering some of the minor Romantic poets writing between the years 1800 and 1820 we turn first to Leigh Hunt. He is remembered now chiefly for his friendship with Byron and Keats, and for his powerful influence over the latter. A more significant fact for us is that he knew and liked Wordsworth as a man, and had the greatest of admiration for him as a poet. In his "Autobiography" Hunt describes an unexpected visit from Wordsworth, and tells of his own satisfaction at having a volume of Wordsworth's poems on a shelf next to Milton's. He goes on to tell of his enthusiasm

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for Wordsworth's poetry: "On reading him for myself I became such an admirer that Lord Byron accused me of making him popular upon town".\*

An appreciable part of Hunt's poetry deals with nature and shows clearly that Hunt was sensitive to her charms. In his sonnet "To John Keats" he says:

"Tis well you think me one of those,  
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things"

Whence came this sensitiveness of perception? Was it the result of his appreciation for Wordsworth's ideas on nature? In his "Autobiography" Hunt says that he knew the glories of Nature before he saw them pointed out by Wordsworth. In spite of this statement it is probable that at least an added poignancy was given to his nature experiences by familiarity with Wordsworth. But this general observation is about as far as we can go. There is no tangible evidence that Hunt was concerned with those peculiar conceptions of nature which were so distinctly Wordsworth's. His nearest approach to a Wordsworthian feeling for nature is to be found in the sonnet already quoted - "To John Keats". In this poem he shows a sympathetic understanding for the "things" of nature- as they go their joyous way:

"Tis well you think me truly one of those,  
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things,  
For surely as I feel the bird that sings  
Behind the leaves, or dawn as it upgrows,  
Or the rich bee rejoicing as he goes,  
Or the glad issue of emerging spring"-

His feeling for the singing bird and for the bee is certainly in the spirit of Wordsworth. But we feel that this mood is transient and not deep-rooted and sustained as is Wordsworth's.

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It leads to no further philosophical concepts about nature - and her meaning to man.

In "The Grasshopper and the Cricket" Hunt becomes slightly more intimate with two of nature's children than is his wont; but even so the feeling evinced for nature has very slight resemblance, in any but a general way, to that of Wordsworth on the subject. Hunt thinks of the grasshopper and the cricket as happy little creatures whose sole object on earth is to sing their joyous songs. That is all; they have no further significance either for man or for nature.

For the most part Hunt considers nature objectively. He has some beautiful lyrics in which the loveliness of the external world are ably described. In "The Summer of 1818" he describes the beauty and joyousness of summer and lightly advises mortals:

"---light your cheeks at nature, do,  
And draw the whole world after you."

In some of the sonnets written in the years 1816-1818 (the period in which he seems to have been most subject to the influence of the external world) he deals largely with nature. Man is generally shown surrounded by her beauties. The wisdom, calm, and love of nature is portrayed, but still in an objective fashion. Hunt feels no real spiritual bond between man and nature.

In the other poems in which he treats nature Hunt is still more objective. He makes nature the background for human action. His retelling of the old Paolo and Francesca romance in the poem, "The Story of Rimini", is a good example. It is the wedding morning, a joyous occasion. Consequently, to complete his happy picture, Hunt feels constrained to paint a natural setting which

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in which he seems to have been most subject to the influence of  
the external world) he deals largely with nature. Man is generally  
shown surrounded by her beauties. The weather, calm, and love of  
nature is portrayed, but still in an objective fashion. Hunt  
feels no real spiritual bond between man and nature.

In the other poems in which he treats nature Hunt is still  
more objective. He makes nature the background for human action.  
His retelling of the old Prose and Romance romance in the  
poem "The Story of Rimini" is a good example. It is the wedding  
morning, a joyous occasion. Consequently, to complete his happy  
picture, Hunt feels constrained to paint a natural setting which

is in complete harmony with the events to follow. So he devotes the first two stanzas of the poem to a detailed description of a bright, sunshiny May morning; nature's

"Sky, earth and sea,  
Breathes like a bright-eyed face, that laughs out  
openly.

-----  
'Tis Nature, full of spirits, waked and springing."\*

After the first two stanzas nature is dropped and forgotten until he brings it <sup>in</sup> again to introduce Canto II. Here he describes evening in the same manner that he has previously used for morning. In both of these sections nature is considered as a unit in itself, man as another. The poet deduces no philosophical significance from nature; his nature is in the same category as bright clothes, beautiful ladies, and prancing horses. It is exciting, has pictorial value, but has no deeper meaning.

Other poems typical of this formal treatment of nature, which is characteristic of most of his poetry in which nature is mentioned, are "Hero and Leander" and "Ballads of Robin Hood". In these we have again the conventionalized nature descriptions serving as background for the action. No consideration is given nature for herself.

From our study of the possibility of Wordsworth's influence on Hunt we conclude: first, that a very few of Hunt's poems show a slight similarity of feeling to that of Wordsworth, a similarity too indefinite, however, to show any direct influence; second, that Hunt's feeling for nature as shown in his other poems is totally different from Wordsworth's- and consequently shows no influence.

\* "The Story of Rimini" Canto I

is in complete harmony with the events to follow. As he devotes  
the first two stanzas of the poem to a detailed description of  
a bright, sunny day, sunny May morning; nature's

"Sly, earth and sea,  
Breathes like a bright-eyed face, that laughs out  
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"The Nature, full of spirit, wakes and springs."

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influence.

### Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Scott and Wordsworth first met in 1802. From that time until Scott's death the two were the warmest of friends. Yet in spite of their mutual respect and affection Wordsworth waved Scott's poetry aside as trivial, and Scott looked askance at much of Wordsworth's. Wordsworth considered Scott's poetry mere rhymed story-telling, he thought it superficial and external; Scott, he said, "was not true to nature; his descriptions were addressed to the ear, not to the mind".\* For his part Scott, although he valiantly defended Wordsworth against the critics, was forced to admit that he "differed from him in many points of taste".\*\* Scott shows further his own difference in feeling when he says: "Why he will sometimes choose to crawl upon all-fours, when God has given his so noble a countenance to lift to heaven, I am (as) little able to account for----". Scott recognized Wordsworth's unusual imaginative power but felt that it carried him into impossible extremes and that it was misdirected. In a letter written in 1806 he comments on this point: "Were it not for the unfortunate idea of forming a new school of poetry, these men (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey) are calculated to give it a new impulse; but I sometimes think they lose their energy in trying to find, not a better but a different path from what has been travelled by their predecessors".\*\*\*

So fascinated was Scott by the romance of antiquity that he was but half satisfied in observing external beauties of the universe which he could not connect with some legendary or histor-

\* From Rannie,- "Wordsworth and His Circle"-p.245.

\*\* Ibid.

\*\*\* Letter to Miss Sewell - 1806.

Scott and Wordsworth first met in 1802. From that time until Scott's death the two were the warmest of friends. Yet in spite of their mutual respect and affection Wordsworth regarded Scott's poetry as trivial, and Scott looked on him as a "story-telling" man, as though it were superficial and external. Scott, he said, "was not true to nature; his descriptions were addressed to the ear, not to the mind." For his part Scott, although he violently defended Wordsworth against the critics, was forced to admit that he "differed from him in many points of taste." Scott shows further his own difference in feeling when he says: "Why he will sometimes choose to crawl upon all-fours, when God has given him so noble a countenance to lift to heaven, I am (as) little able to account for----". Scott recognized Wordsworth's unusual imaginative power but felt that it carried him into impossible extremes and that it was misdirected. In a letter written in 1808 he comments on this point: "Were it not for the unfortunate idea of founding a new school of poetry, these men (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey) are calculated to give it a new impulse; but I sometimes think they lose their energy in trying to find, not a better but a different path from what has been travelled by their predecessors." So fascinated was Scott by the romance of antiquity that he was but half-articled in observing external beauties of the universe which he could not connect with some legendary or historical story. From Bannockburn, - "Wordsworth and Keats" - p. 245. See also Scott's letter to Miss Egwell - 1806.

ical events. To feel really at home with nature he must be near an old castle or field of battle. Scott recognized this fact when he said: "The love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins or remains of our fathers' piety and splendour, became with me an insatiable passion".\* This tendency in Scott is well illustrated in the following passage from "The Lady of the Lake". James FitzJames, looking down from a promontory upon the beautiful Loch Katrine, immediately reflects in this wise:

"What a scene were here--  
 For princely pomp or churchman's pride!  
 On this bold brow a lordly tower;  
 In this soft vale a lady's bower;  
 On yonder meadow, far away  
 The turrets of a cloister grey", etc.\*\*

The most beautiful and romantic of scenes was not enough in itself for Scott. To satisfy him it must be peopled with the life of a vanished age. Coleridge comments upon this difference between Scott and himself. He says: "Dear Sir Walter Scott and myself were exact, but harmonious, opposites in this,- that every old ruin, hill, river, or tree called up in his mind a host of historical or autobiographical associations,- whereas, for myself- I believe I should walk over the plain of Marathon without taking more interest in it than in any other plain of similar features".\*\*\*

Scott's imagination did not possess the reach nor breadth of Wordsworth's. Locality meant practically nothing to Wordsworth. He cared little whether "Lines Written in Early Spring" was set in Grasmere or the Trosachs. To Scott locality was of the utmost importance. In writing a story he felt that actual scenery of

\* Quoted from Beers, H.A. - "History of English Romanticism-p.15

\*\* "The Lady of the Lake", Canto I, stanza XV

\*\*\* "Table Talk"- August 11, 1833

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\* Quoted from Fraser, H.A., - "History of English Romanticism", p. 15  
 as "The Lady of the Lake", canto I, stanza XV  
 see "Table Talk" - August 11, 1855

an action was part of its life blood; if the setting were changed the story failed. Hence we see in his poetry the attempt to make an "inventory of nature's charms",\* which roused the wrath of Wordsworth. One of the many examples of this "detailed obtrusiveness" is the following from "The Lady of the Lake" in which, it must be admitted, the external beauties of the natural scenery are vividly, if wholly objectively, presented:

"Boon nature scattered, free and wild,  
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child,  
Here eglantine embalmed the air,  
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there,  
The primrose pale and violet flower  
Found in each cliff a narrow bower;  
Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,

-----  
Grouped their dark lines with every stain  
The weather-beaten crags retain.  
With boughs that quaked at every breath,  
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;  
Aloft, the ash and warrior oak  
Cast anchor in the rifted rock;

-----  
Highest of all where white peaks glanced,

-----  
The summer heaven's delicious blue; "\*\*

Here we see that absolutely no spiritual meaning is given to nature. Analysis of the passage shows that it contains nothing but a cataloging of details which are made into an effective picture by the poet's imaginative touches. In all of Scott's other long narrative poems we find a similar handling of nature.

A short poem entitled "The Violet" furnishes further illustration of Scott's treatment:

"The violet in her greenwood bower,  
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,  
May boast itself the fairest flower  
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.

\* Quoted from Myers - "Wordsworth" p. 144

\*\* Canto I, lines 512-533

an action was part of his life blood; if the setting were changed the story failed. Hence we see in his poetry the attempt to make an "inventory of nature's charms" which roused the wrath of Wordsworth. One of the early examples of this "detailed objectiveness" is the following from "The Lady of the Lake" in which, it must be admitted, the external beauties of the natural scenery are vividly, if wholly objectively, presented:

"Soon nature assisted, free and wild,  
Each plant or flower, the mountain's child,  
Her fragrance breathed the air,  
Hawthorn and hazel mingled there,  
The primrose pale and violet flower;  
Round the rock with a narrow bow;  
Foxglove and alchemilla, side by side,

-----  
Growned about dark lines with every stain  
The weather-beaten crags retain.  
With bosoms that drank at every breeze,  
Grey birch and aspen wept beneath;  
Aloft, the oak and yew-tree oak  
Gave shelter to the tilted rock;

-----  
Highest of all whose white peaks glaced,

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Here we see that absolutely no spiritual meaning is given to nature. Analysis of the passage shows that it contains nothing but a cataloging of details which are made into an effective closure by the poet's imaginative touches. In all of Scott's other long narrative poems we find a similar handling of nature. A short poem entitled "The Violet" illustrates further

illustration of Scott's treatment:

"The violet in her greenwood bow,  
Where daisies bow with hazel mists,  
May boast itself the fairest flower  
In field, or copse, or forest dingle.

Though fair her gems of azure hue,  
 Beneath the dewdrops weight reclining;  
 I've seen an eye of lovelier hue,  
 More sweet through wat'ry lustre shining.

The summer sun that dew shall dry  
 Ere yet the day be past its morrow,  
 Nor longer in my false love's eye  
 Remain'd the tear of parting sorrow!"

The violet in this poem is considered purely from the objective point of view. A pretty picture of nature is painted - the violet, greenwood bower, birchen boughs, hazels and all. But the poet is little interested in the violet; his interest is in his "false love's eye" from which the tears are so soon dried after his departure. The violet is considered only for the sake of comparison. Scott discovers no philosophical truth in the violet - or in its surroundings; he attaches no moral significance to its existence; he has no thought of the violet as being part of the spiritual personality of nature.

It is unnecessary to point out further examples of the wide divergence between Scott's treatment of nature and Wordsworth's. Scott's poetry shows a consideration for none of the spiritual or philosophical conceptions of nature which are part and parcel of Wordsworth's. As with Keats, Scott's eyes and ears may have been sensitized to catch more completely the beauty of the external universe, but his mind certainly was not stimulated to philosophical contemplation by familiarity with Wordsworth's nature poetry. His spell of nature is no less real than Wordsworth's; but it is of a different kind. His is wrought not mystically "but by sheer high heart and gallant spirit. In hills and woods and streams he finds nothing 'far more deeply

Though fair her gaze of azure blue,  
 Beneath the darkness welketh smiling;  
 I've seen an eye of lovelier hue,  
 More sweet through wat'ry lustre shining.

The answer soon that dew shall dry  
 Ere yet the day be past the morn,  
 Nor longer in my lover's eye  
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interfused', no message from the informing soul of the world; but he is inspired by the manifest, the obvious, the outward beauty".\*

### Robert Southey (1774-1843)

From their first meeting in 1796 Wordsworth and Robert Southey were consistent and loyal friends. They lived from 1803 to 1843 but about fifteen miles apart, Wordsworth at Grasmere and later at Rydal Mount, Southey at Keswick, and it was not unusual for one of them to spend several days at a time at the other's home. After twenty years of proximity Southey wrote of his friend: "In every relation of life, and every point of view, Wordsworth is a truly exemplary and admirable man".\*\* But Southey did not merely respect and like Wordsworth as a man; he had a most exalted opinion of Wordsworth as a poet. Rannie, in his discussion of Southey, states that "None of Wordsworth's critics were quite as deliberately and steadily admiring as Southey".\*\*\* Southey himself expresses his sincere enthusiasm for his friend's poetic ability when he says: "I speak not from the partiality of friendship, nor because we have been so absurdly held up as both writing upon one concerted system of poetry, but with the most deliberate exercise of impartial judgment whereof I am capable, when I declare my full conviction that posterity will rank him with Milton".\*\*\*\* Fifteen years later in discussing the same subject Southey shows that his earlier judgment has not changed: "A greater poet than Wordsworth

\* Lang - Introduction to Poetical Works of Scott -Vol.I,p.XXX

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\*\*\* Rannie - "Wordsworth and His Circle" - p. 115

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there never has been, nor ever will be. I could point out some of his pieces which seem to be good for nothing, and not a few faulty passages, but I know of no poet in any language who has written so much that is good!"

Southey, who with Wordsworth and Coleridge, made up that famous triumvirate known as the Lake Poets, was one of the most prolific writers in the English language, his poems alone filling ten volumes. Of those written between 1798 and 1820 "Thalaba" (1801), "Madoc" (1805), "Kehama" (1810), and "Roderick, the Last of the Goths" (1814) are the outstanding. These four are all long narratives on medieval or oriental subjects of a legendary or historical origin. For the most part they are little concerned with nature, although occasional nature passages of power and beauty are to be found in them. Likewise, Southey's other poetry of this period rarely deals with this subject. Why, we ask ourselves, does Southey evince such a comparatively slight interest in nature? He lives amid her wonders; he is closely associated with Wordsworth whose attention is continually fixed on nature. Moreover, nature is one of the chief poetic themes of the whole Romantic movement. The answer is to be found, I think, in Southey's poetic theories and in his exceptional learning.

Southey believes implicitly that novelty of theme was essential to poetic success. This idea, of course, was one of the fundamental tenets of Romanticism. Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and "Christobel", and Scott's exciting tales of the Middle Ages are typical of this tendency. But Southey, in his desire to attain novelty lost sight of the fact, so obvious to

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Wordsworth, that all nature is filled with novelty; simple trees, flowers, and birds have a freshness, a mystery to the observant eye which is just as unusual as a tale about a Patagonian chieftain. Southey's method of attaining novelty was to pick out a strikingly strange theme, generally oriental, and to treat it in a scholarly fashion, with great attention to refined expression and skilful and unusual meter. These facts,--strange or outlandish themes, painstaking attention to details of expression, and extreme scholarship,-- account for Southey's comparatively small interest in nature.

A few examples will suffice to allow us to compare Southey's treatment of nature with Wordsworth's. The first shows Southey's occasional sensitiveness to nature, and his appreciation of the fact that beautiful scenery can affect man's moods:

"Slow sunk the glorious sun, a roseate light  
 Spread o'er the forest from his lingering rays;  
 The glowing clouds, upon Gualberto's sight  
 Softened in shade; he could not choose but gaze;  
 And now a placid grayness clad the heaven,  
 Save where the west retained the last green light of even.  
 Cool breathed the grateful air, and fresher now  
 The fragrance of the autumnal leaves arose;  
 The passing gale scarce moved the o'erhanging bough,  
 And not a sound disturbed the deep repose  
 Save when a falling leaf came fluttering by,  
 Save the near brooklet-stream that murmured quietly.  
 Is there who has not felt the deep delight,  
 The hush of soul, that scenes like this impart?  
 The heart that will not soften is not right!"--\*

We have in this passage a fine descriptive quality, evidence of careful and appreciative observation of nature. A vivid, colorful scene is portrayed, which, Southey feels, must influence the soul of the normal observer. In a general way the thought of the passage resembles Wordsworth; it bears a closer resemblance,

\* "St. Gualberto" - stanza 36

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A few examples will suffice to allow us to compare Southey's  
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"How much the flowers see, a rosy light  
Bursts o'er the forest from his lightning eye;  
The flowers shudder upon Southey's sight  
Softened in shade; he could not choose but gaze;  
And now a wilder creature o'er the heaven,  
Have where the west retained the last green light of even.  
Cool breezes the grateful air, and fresher now  
The fragrance of the autumnal leaves arose;  
The passing gale scarce moved the clinging bough,  
And not a sound disturbed the deep repose  
Save when a falling leaf came fluttering by,  
Save the rustle of the leaves that murmured softly.  
In those who had not felt the deep delight  
The truth of soul, that seems like this imagery?  
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passage resembles wordworth's; it bears a closer resemblance,

however, to Cowper, whose influence Southey later acknowledges.\* (not in respect to this one particular poem.) The physical properties of nature are considered by Southey, just as they have been by Cowper, and their soothing effect on man is remarked. Wordsworth felt that the physical world of nature was merely an outer covering for a unified and unifying soul of nature which influences man through spiritual communion. Southey gives, in our example, no hint that he is conscious of such a soul in nature. A few lines from another poem show even more clearly the essential differences between Southey's and Wordsworth's conception:

"(The river) Flowing where its summer voice  
Makes the mountain herds rejoice;

-----

Please the eye in every part,  
Lull the ear, and sooth the heart."\*\*

The external accompaniments of the river - its appearance and music - are the properties which "sooth the heart" of man. It is invested with no conscious spirit which communicates with man.

Another stanza illustrating Southey's heartfelt reverence for the beauty of nature is the following invocation to night:

"How beautiful is night!  
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;  
No mist obscures, nor cloud nor speck nor stain  
Breaks the serene of heaven;  
In full-orbed glory yonder moon divine  
Rolls through the dark-blue depths.  
Beneath her steady ray  
The desert-circle spreads,  
Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.  
How beautiful is night."\*\*\*

These exquisite lines, in the spirit of Collins' "Ode to Evening", attest to Southey's sensitiveness, but they certainly do not

\* Southey - General Preface to Poetical Works - 1837

\*\* "Lines Written in the Album of Rotha Guillinan"

\*\*\* "Thalaba" - Book I, Stanza I

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the other hand, is conscious of such a soul in  
nature. A few lines from another poem show even more clearly the  
essential difference between Southey's and Wordsworth's  
conception:

"(The river) Flowing where the summer voice  
Wakes the mountain herds to play;  
Please the eye in every part,  
Lull the ear, and soothe the heart." etc.

The external accompaniments of the river - the appearance and  
music - are the properties which "soothe the heart" of man. It  
is invested with no consciousness which would communicate with man.  
Another stanza illustrating Southey's heartless reverence  
for the beauty of nature is the following invocation to night:

"How beautiful is night!  
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;  
No wind disturbs, nor cloud nor shower stains  
Breathes the serene of heaven;  
In full-orbed glory yonder moon divine  
Rolls through the dark-blue ether.  
Behold her steady ray  
The desert-abysses irradiate,  
Like the round ocean, gilded with the day.  
How beautiful is night!" etc.

These exalted lines, in the spirit of Coleridge's "Ode to Evening,"  
attest to Southey's sensitiveness, but they certainly do not

\* Southey - General Preface to Poetical Works - 1807  
see "Lamia" written in the spirit of Robert Gifford?  
see "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" - Book I, Stanza I

furnish evidence of Wordsworth's influence- since similar feelings have been expressed before by countless poets.

As a final quotation we have another beautiful nature description taken from "Roderick, the Last of the Goths". Of all Southey's nature poetry in this period this approaches nearest to Wordsworth's spiritual conception:

"How calmly, gliding through the dark-blue sky,  
The midnight moon ascends! Her placid beams,  
Through thinly scattered leaves and boughs grotesque,  
Mottle with mazy shades the orchard slope -

-----  
And there the glittering argentry  
Ripples and glances on the confluent stream.

-----  
---and oh! how awfully  
Into that deep and tranquil firmament  
The summits of Anseva rise serene!  
The watchman on the battlements partakes  
The stillness of the solemn hour; he feels  
The silence of the earth, the endless sound  
Of flowing water soothes him, and the stars-  
Which in that brightest moonlight well-nigh quenched  
Scarce visible, as in the utmost depth  
Of yonder sapphire infinite, are seen -  
Draw on, with elevating influence,  
Toward eternity the attempered mind,  
Musing on worlds beyond the grave he stands,  
And to the virgin mother silently  
Prefers her hymn of praise." \*

There is still a wide gap between Southey's thinking and Wordsworth's. It is still merely objects, in this case mountain peaks, moonlight and stars, which draw on the poet's mind to "elevated thoughts". He does not express a definite belief in an all-inclusive soul of nature. Wordsworth feels "a presence that disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts".\*\* The "attempered mind" in Southey's poem is drawn on by the "elevating influence" of natural phenomena. But although not expressed, Southey does, it seems to me, catch a

\* "Roderick, the Last of the Goths" - Canto XV

\*\* "Tintern Abbey"

lurid evidence of Wordsworth's influence - since similar feelings

have been expressed before by countless poets.

As a final quotation we have another beautiful nature

description taken from "Roderick, the Last of the Goths". Of all

Sonnet's nature poetry in this period this approach is nearest to

Wordsworth's spiritual conception:

"How calmly, gliding through the dark-blue sky,  
The night-moon ascends! Her gleams descend,  
Through thinly scattered leaves and boughs grotesque,  
Wells with many shades the orchard slope -

And there the glittering argenteous  
Ripples and glances on the silent stream.

---and on! how swiftly  
Into that deep and tranquil firmament  
The sunbeams of heaven rise serene!  
The watchman on the battlements gazes  
The stillness of the solemn hour; he feels  
The silence of the earth, the endless sound  
Of flowing water soothes him, and the noise  
Which in that brightest moonlight well-nigh quenched  
Scarcely visible, as in the utmost depth  
Of yonder azure infinite, the sea -  
Draw on, with elevating influence,  
Toward eternally the attenuated mind,  
Waiting on worlds beyond the grave he stands,  
And to the virgin mother silently  
Prefers her hymn of praise."

There is still a wide gap between Sonnet's thinking and Wordsworth's.

It is still merely objects, in this case mountain peaks, moonlight

and stars, which draw on the poet's mind to "elevated thoughts". He

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But although not expressed, Sonnet does, it seems to me, catch a

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breath of the pantheistic doctrine of Wordsworth, and of the feeling that man is drawn by irresistible bonds to listen to nature's inspiring voice. The similarity of feeling here observed is so intangible, so much a matter of the individual reader's reaction, that it cannot be cited as a definite example of Wordsworth's influence.

There is, I feel certain, no justification for the belief that Southey was to a noticeable degree, influenced by Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. For one thing, Southey seems to have used nature in his poems as little as possible. Very few of his short poems deal primarily with nature, and in his long narrative poems nature is sparingly employed, and then only as a necessary setting for following action. In this latter respect he differs radically from Scott, who delights in describing nature on all occasions, a characteristic which is often irritating to the reader. If Southey had been even a luke-warm disciple of Wordsworth, it seems that he certainly would have shown a more consistent interest in Wordsworth's chief consideration. In the second place, the distinctive characteristics of Wordsworth's nature philosophy are not to be found in Southey. Southey sees and feels the full glory of objective nature, he understands her power over man. But the exalted intellectual concepts of Wordsworth, in which nature, in detail and in general, is felt to be the embodiment and vehicle of the universe, in which nature is endowed with a mystical personality, a hallowed unity embracing the soul of man, made, apparently, no impression on Southey. As Rannie remarks, "Southey

breath of the pantheistic doctrine of Wordsworth, and of the feeling that man is drawn by irresistible bonds to listen to nature's inspiring voice. The singularity of feeling here observed is so intimate, so much a matter of the individual reader's reaction, that it cannot be cited as a definite example of Wordsworth's influence.

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perhaps never entered Wordsworth's world at any point."\*

### John Wilson (1785-1841)

According to Rannie, John Wilson (Christopher North), and Thomas DeQuincey were, of all the English poets and critics living in the early 1800's, the two who felt most immediately and most strongly the true significance of "Lyrical Ballads".\*\* Carrie Lowell in her interesting treatment of Wilson notes that: "Lyrical Ballads", which made its appearance in 1798 when Wilson was a student at Glasgow met with a cold reception by the general public but a few discerning ones received it with enthusiasm, and Wilson was one of these.\*\*\* So enthusiastic, indeed, was Wilson upon first reading "Lyrical Ballads" that he immediately addressed a letter to Wordsworth in which he expressed his youthful admiration for the volume, as well as a certain few "trivial" points of criticism. Wilson's sympathetic appreciation for the true greatness of Wordsworth's poetry, particularly as it concerned nature, is attested to in his more mature critical opinion expressed in "An Hour's Talk on Poetry". He says: "In describing external nature as she is, no poet perhaps has excelled Wordsworth - not even Thomson; in embuing her and making her pregnant with spiritualities, till the mighty mother teems with 'beauty far more beauteous' than she had ever rejoiced in till such communion - he excels all the brotherhood. Therein lies his special glory, and therein the immortal evidence of the might of his creative imagination. All men at times muse on nature with a poet's eye; but Wordsworth ever- and his soul has grown more and more

\* Rannie "Wordsworth and His Circle"- p.93

\*\* Rannie - "Wordsworth and His Circle" - p.250

\*\*\* Lowell, C.T.-"Christopher North and the Noctes Ambrosianae"-Chap.II

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Rennie "Wordsworth and His Circle" - p. 62  
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see Lowell, G.T. - "Christopher North and the Norths"

religious from such worship. Every rock, is an altar- every grove a shrine!"\* This criticism is accurate and keen; its wisdom has been borne out by posterity. It is significant in that it shows Wilson's complete understanding of the peculiar excellencies of Wordsworth's nature doctrine.

In view of the sustained enthusiasm for Wordsworth which the above material has shown we turn to Wilson's poetry with some degree of expectation. Should not this discipleship to Wordsworth, which Rannie mentions as being (along with DeQuincey's) the only instances to be found in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, blossom forth in Wilson's poetry?

Although, as Wilson observes, "all men at times muse on nature with the poet's eye,"\*\* there can be no doubt but that Wordsworth, by his insistence upon nature as a theme- and by his glorification of her beauties, made many of his contemporaries more aware of her reality than they otherwise would have been. If ever a poet was sensitive to the glories of the external world that poet was Wilson. His poems continually deal with nature as a theme; he is ever conscious of her presence, even when engaged in such all-engrossing pursuits as hunting and fishing. The artist appreciated this quality in Wilson when he drew an illustration\*\*\* for an edition of Wilson's poems. The poet is depicted out hunting, astride a horse which is contentedly nibbling grass. Wilson, gun over his shoulder, is gazing abstractedly at his prey, (a small bird). which is sitting unalarmed on a branch over the poet's head. Wilson is obviously engrossed in a

\* "Recreations of Christopher North"

\*\* "Recreations of Christopher North"

\*\*\* "The Isle of Palms and Other Poems" - Frontispiece

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\* "Recollections of Christopher North"  
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see "The Life of John and Other Poems" - Frontispiece

contemplation of nature's wonders; his soul is drinking in her manifestations.

It seems certain to me that Wilson's attention was focussed on nature by his early appreciation of "Lyrical Ballads". Writing in 1802 when he was seventeen years old he told Wordsworth that he valued "Lyrical Ballads" next to the Bible.\* Furthermore I believe that through his later friendship and close association with Wordsworth his attention was kept in focus throughout the rest of his life. There were undoubtedly others, as I have already stated, who were influenced in this general way by Wordsworth. In some cases the evidence might be convincing; in the majority it would probably be mere supposition. But in the case of Wilson the evidence seems well-nigh conclusive.

When we consider the philosophy of Wilson's nature poetry we instantly observe many similarities to that of Wordsworth. In none of the poets which we have studied has there been such a consistent spiritual and intellectual affinity with Wordsworth as is to be found in Wilson. "The Isle of Palms and Other Poems" was published in 1812, shortly after Wilson had moved to Elleray on Lake Windemere. His house was only a few miles from Wordsworth's and the two, already acquaintances, soon became close friends. Undoubtedly these facts, as well as certain similarities which were observed between this volume and the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, led the critics to include Wilson in that much derided circle known as the Lake Poets. However that may be, it is certain that he was much more of a "Lakist" than either

\* "Letters of Christopher North".

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it is certain that he was much more of a "lakeist" than either

Southey or Coleridge if spiritual agreement with, and adherence to, certain poetic ideals expounded by Wordsworth be the gauge.

"The Isle of Palms" shows less the influence of Wordsworth than other poems in the volume. To be sure the setting of the story is wild nature, and the characters are lowly, and there is an occasional couplet which strikes a Wordsworthian note, such as

"And though opprest with heaviest grief  
From Nature's bliss we draw relief"

But Wilson is writing a narrative poem and spends little time in philosophizing.

In other poems contained in this volume, however, we have such an abundance of passages indicative of Wordsworth's power over Wilson that we can pick almost at random. In the following lines from the poem, "My Cottage", a number of ideas about nature, similar to those of Wordsworth are expressed:

"-----The Summer air,  
Whose glittering stillness sleeps within his soul,  
Stirs with its own delight. The verdant earth,  
Like beauty waking from a happy dream,  
Lies smiling

-----  
-----Ever blest  
The man who thus beholds the golden chain  
Linking his soul to outward Nature fair,  
Full of the living God!"

In the first stanza the poet conceives of the earth and air as being infused with the spirit of happiness. Wordsworth has felt the existence of this thrill of happiness which pervades nature - "the voice of common pleasure"\*. In the second stanza Wilson touches a familiar theme of Wordsworth, i.e. man and nature are spiritually bound by indissoluble ties. The Living God existing in "outward

\* "Poems on the Naming of Places" -I.

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"And though opposed with harvest glare  
From Nature's field we draw relief."

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"-----The answer is,  
Whose glittering stillness abides within his soul,  
Sits with its own delight. The verdant earth,  
Like beauty waking from a happy dream,  
Lies smiling

-----Ever black  
The man who thus holds the golden chain  
Linking his soul to outward Nature fair,  
Full of the living God!"

In the first stanza the poet conceives of the earth and all as being infused with the spirit of happiness. Wordsworth has felt the existence of this thrill of happiness which pervades nature - "the voice of common pleasure". In the second stanza Wilson touches a familiar theme of Wordsworth, i. e., man and nature are spiritually bound by indissoluble ties. The living God existing in "outward

Nature fair" corresponds to Wordsworth's "presence"- or soul pervading all nature. Here we have not merely the portrayal of various objects of nature, but a consideration for the mystical something running through them all, unifying them all, and giving reality to the whole.

The following extract from "Peace and Innocence" breathes the mystical quality which is the spirit of Wordsworth's nature philosophy. The poet is describing the coming on of night:

"Almost could I believe with life imbued  
And hush'd in dreams, this gentle solitude.  
Look where I may, a tranquillizing soul  
Breathes forth a life-like pleasure o'er the whole.  
The shadows setting on the mountain's breast  
Recline, as conscious of the hour of rest;  
The sleepy trees are bending o'er the stream;  
With soundlike silence, motionlike repose,  
My heart obeys the power of earth and sky,  
And 'mid the quiet slumbers quietly!"

Here nature is endowed with that same spiritual quality which we find in so much of Wordsworth's nature poetry, and which has lifted it from mediocrity to greatness. Wilson feels a presence, a soul in solitude; this soul is omnipresent and all powerful. The shadows, mountains, trees, streams, air, and even man are all pleasantly conscious of its existence and all feel the tranquillizing and unifying influence, of its presence.

Another poem, "The Hermitage", contains further concrete points of resemblance. In this, man's communion with the spirit of nature and his inspiration and moral help derived from her are shown:

"Stranger! I know thee not: yet since thy feet  
Have wandered here, I deem that thou art one  
Whose heart doth love in silent communings  
To walk with Nature, and from scenes like these

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Another poem, "The Hartsage", contains further concrete  
 pointed testimony. In this, man's communion with the spirit  
 of nature and his inspiration and moral help derived from her are  
 shown:

"Hartsage! I know thee not; yet since thy foot  
 Have wandered here, I deem that thou art one  
 Whose heart both love in silent communion  
 To walk with Nature, and from scenes like these

Of solemn sadness, to sublime thy soul  
 To high endurance of all earthly pains  
 Of mind or body; so that thou connect  
 With Nature's lovely and more lofty forms,  
 Congenial thoughts of grandeur or of grace  
 In moral being."

The dynamic power of nature, one of Wordsworth's favorite themes, is treated in this poem. From communion with nature man's soul is strengthened to endure "all earthly pains of mind or body". Man's mind and soul are purged by communication with nature; from the fundamental morality which is part of her life man is sublimated.

An unusual poem of Wilson's is one having the prosaic title, "The Angler's Tent". It contains an account of a fishing expedition with a group of friends,- together with many powerful descriptions of nature. Wilson apparently felt some diffidence in writing this poem since one of the fishermen was Wordsworth.

"To thee, my Wordsworth! whose inspired song  
 Comes forth in pomp from Nature's inner shrine,  
 To thee by birth-right such high themes belong,  
 The unseen grandeur of the earth is thine!  
 One lowlier simple strain of human love be mine!"

The above passage re-emphasizes the fact that Wordsworth is in 1812 a potent factor in Wilson's life. He recognizes Wordsworth as the supreme authority on nature. Interspersed throughout the poem are a number of ideas concerning nature which are akin to Wordsworth's. With Wordsworth Wilson feels the all-pervading spirit of conscious love and happiness in nature: he feels her soothing powers; he feels a sense of fellowship, of communion between nature's soul and his own:

Of solemn sadness, to soothe the soul  
To high exultance of all earthly being  
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"To thee, my Wordsworth! whose inspired song  
Came forth in power from Nature's inner shrine,  
To thee by right I turn with solemn homage,  
The sacred grandeur of the earth is thine!  
One lovelier strain of nature have we mingled

The above passage re-emphasizes the fact that Wordsworth is in fact  
a potent factor in Wilson's life. He recognizes Wordsworth as  
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spirit of conscious love and happiness in nature: he feels her  
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between nature's soul and his own:

"Our hearts were open to the gracious love  
Of nature, smiling like a happy bride;  
So following the still impulse from above  
Down the green slope we wind with airy glide,

-----  
All passions in our souls were lull'd to sleep,  
Ev'n by the power of Nature's holy bliss;

-----  
We view'd the green earth with a loving look  
Like us rejoicing in the gracious sky:  
A voice came to us from the running brook  
That seem'd to breathe a grateful melody.  
Then all things seem'd embued with life and sense!"

This feeling bears a striking resemblance to that in a poem of  
Wordsworth's already quoted, beginning:

"It was an April morning; fresh and clear  
The rivulet, delighting in its strength  
Ran with a young man's speed!\*

Both poems describe the joyousness of nature in the springtime.  
Wilson speaks of nature, "smiling like a happy bride", of the  
earth "like us rejoicing in the gracious sky," of the brook  
"breathing a grateful melody." Wordsworth says:

"The spirit of enjoyment and desire,  
And hopes and wishes, from all living things  
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds!"

His stream too expresses joyousness:

"The stream, so ardent in its course before,  
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all  
Which I till then had heard appeared the voice  
Of common pleasure!"

Both poets sense the conscious life in all nature. Wilson ex-  
presses it definitely:

"Then all things seem's embued with life and sense."

Wordsworth implies the something as he lists some of nature's  
creatures which seem to be expressing consciously their joy in  
living.

\* "Poems on the Naming of Places" I.

"Our people were born to the glorious love  
Of nature, smiling like a happy child;  
So following the still language from above  
Down the green slope we wind with airy stride,

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All passions in our souls were lulled to sleep,  
By the power of Nature's holy bliss;

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"The spirit of enjoyment and desire,  
And hope and wonder, from all living things  
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds."

His strains too express joyousness:

"The stream, so ardent in its course before,  
Sung forth such notes of glad sound, that all  
Which I still then had heard appeared the voice  
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creatures which seem to be expressing consciously their joy in  
living.

And finally, there is an interesting analogy between the voice of Wilson's brook and that of Wordsworth's stream. We feel that the voice coming to Wilson from the running brook is really the embodiment of nature's spirit communing with him. Wordsworth also hears the voice - which comes forth from the combination of all of nature's articulations and seems to the poet "like the wild growth, or like some natural produce of the air, that could not cease to be". Both poets conceive of this voice as being the spiritual expression of nature; both feel that through this medium man and nature communicate. In each of these passages man is shown as subject to the influencing of nature's mood; in each we have, either expressed or by implication, the doctrine of pantheism. The marked similarity of thought which has been pointed out in this and in other poems indicates clearly, I think, Wordsworth's direct influence on Wilson.

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## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to determine whether or not the doctrines of nature contained in Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" exerted any noticeable influence on the English poetry written during the twenty years following the publication of this volume. For the sake of clarity it was necessary first, to study the attitude of Wordsworth's predecessors toward nature; second, to study Wordsworth's own attitude toward nature; and third, to compare the two and see wherein Wordsworth's nature philosophy differed from that of other English poets writing before 1798. As was to be expected, the poets who indicated the most marked interest in wild nature were the Pre-Romanticists beginning with James Thomson. It was found that almost without exception these forerunners of Wordsworth expressed ideas about nature which are incorrectly held by the general poetry-reading public as being peculiarly Wordsworth's. Thus Thomson expresses his love for beautiful aspects of uncultivated scenes of nature; Collins charmingly describes his rapture in the midst of nature's wonders; Burns shows a tender and intimate regard for all of nature's creatures, and derives moral lessons from them; Cowper sincerely loves nature and recognizes her soothing influence over his spirit. The finest and greatest phases of Wordsworth's nature philosophy, however, attain heights far beyond and above these earlier conceptions. Wordsworth carries on where they leave off. His surpassing excellence lies in the fact that he imbues nature with spirituality. He invests her with a consciousness, a soul, which is in continual communion with man's, and he conceives of

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In this paper I have attempted to determine whether or not the doctrine of nature contained in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" exerted any noticeable influence on the English poetry written during the twenty years following the publication of this volume. For the sake of clarity it was necessary first, to study the attitude of Wordsworth's predecessors toward nature; second, to study Wordsworth's own attitude toward nature; and third, to compare the two and see wherein Wordsworth's nature philosophy differed from that of other English poets writing before 1798. As was to be expected, the poets who indicated the most marked interest in wild nature were the Pre-Romantic poets beginning with James Thomson. It was found that almost without exception these forerunners of Wordsworth expressed ideas about nature which are theoretically held by the general poetry-reading public as being particularly Wordsworthian. Thus Thomson expresses his love for beautiful aspects of ruralized scenes of nature; Coleridge characteristically describes his rapture in the midst of nature's wonders; Burns shows a tender and intimate regard for all of nature's creatures, and derives moral lessons from them; Cowper sincerely loves nature and recognizes her soothing influence over his agitated mind. The finest and greatest phases of Wordsworth's nature philosophy, however, attain heights far beyond and above these earlier conceptions. Wordsworth carries on where they leave off. His surpassing excellence lies in the fact that he takes nature with spiritualty. He invests her with a consciousness, a soul, which is in continual communion with man's, and he conceives of

all living things as being bound together by this soul into one large brotherhood. None of his predecessors have sounded these philosophical depths; they have been enthusiastically splashing about on the surface.

Any influence which can rightly be called by that name, must relate to this peculiar spiritual quality which Wordsworth's nature poetry alone possesses up to the time of "Lyrical Ballads". With this fact in mind we have considered eight of the Romantic poets: Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Hunt, Southey, Scott, and Wilson.

Both external and internal evidence leads to the conclusion that Coleridge, during the years 1800-1820, was little influenced by Wordsworth's nature philosophy. In this time he wrote little poetry about nature, and with one or two possible exceptions, what he did write does not contain ideas similar to those instinctly Wordsworthian. An explanation for this fact may be contained in a letter (1820) in which Coleridge expressed his disapproval of many features of Wordsworth's philosophy of nature.

In the case of Byron we find very definite evidence of Wordsworth's influence. It is particularly noticeable in the Third Canto of "Childe Harold". Here Byron accepts whole-heartedly Wordsworth's belief in a unifying soul in nature, man's communion with this soul and its consequent influence over his life. The phrasing in "Childe Harold" is, in many instances, so similar to Wordsworth's that there can be little doubt as to its source of inspiration.

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Shelley furnishes further proof that Wordsworth's views  
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In many poems Shelley expresses his belief in the mystical relationship between man and nature, in the existence of a single spirit pervading all nature and transmitting influences to man. It is plain that he is affected deeply by Wordsworth's philosophy.

We can observe in Keats' poetry no direct influence from Wordsworth. Keats is not an intellectual poet, and apparently absorbed none of Wordsworth's conceptions. Keats uses nature as a medium for the reproducing of sensuous experiences. We can but speculate as to whether or not Keats' perception of the glories of the universe was sharpened by familiarity with Wordsworth. He certainly never manifests any appreciation for that spiritual quality of nature which is characteristic of Wordsworth's conception.

Leigh Hunt, although extremely sensitive to nature's moods, does not catch that higher spiritual significance which she holds for Wordsworth. In Hunt's poems nature is generally treated objectively; her beautiful aspects are described, and that is all. Scott, too, treats nature almost wholly from the objective point of view. He shows an appreciation of her lovelier features, but he was usually so engrossed in the relics of the past that he could not disassociate nature from these considerations. Neither Hunt's nor Scott's nature poetry bears the mark of Wordsworth's influence.

Robert Southey, like Hunt and Scott, had a partiality for long narratives based on legend or history. Two of these poems, "Thalaba" and "Roderick", the Last of the Goths", contain a number of very effective nature pictures. In a passage from the

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latter, as I have pointed out, we catch a hint of Wordsworth's feeling for nature - but it is only for an instant, and is insufficient evidence for claiming influence. In the other long narratives, and in his short poems, in which nature is treated comparatively little, there is no indication of even a partial discipleship to Wordsworth.

On John Wilson, the most obscure poet of those considered, Wordsworth apparently exerted the greatest influence. Wilson's poetry, mainly concerned with nature, is steeped in Wordsworthian doctrine. Like Wordsworth he feels a soul pervading everything in nature; he communes with this soul and is strengthened. He feels the conscious spirit of love and happiness existing in all of nature's creatures and is infected by it. As I have pointed out in my study of Wilson, sections of "The Anglers' Tent" are almost parallel in thought and feeling to passages of Wordsworth's first poem "On the Naming of Places".

It would seem that the eight Romantic poets whom I have considered might be fairly representative of the whole Romantic movement in English poetry. Although it would be dangerous to draw any sweeping conclusions concerning Wordsworth's influence on all English poetry written from 1800 to 1820 - based merely on the poetry of these eight men,- still the study is bound to throw some light on the question, "What was the immediate effect of "Lyrical Ballads"? From our investigation we see that two of the major poets,- Byron and Shelley,- and one of the minor poets, Wilson,- felt the power of Wordsworth's message so deeply that it soon bore fruit in their own poetry. The other five were apparently

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little affected by Wordsworth's genius. In noting the definite stamp of Wordsworth's influence on three of the early Romantic poets we find substantiation for the belief, so often hinted at in English criticism, that "Lyrical Ballads" was the dynamic factor responsible for moulding a new and improved nature philosophy in the early years of the nineteenth century.

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